



Jake
Bonneau
*Local
Historian*

Note: this index was prepared for a quick reference to articles in this book. It is not a complete list of names, places, etc.

This is a complete list of the articles written by Jake Bonneau and printed in the Elba Clipper 1993-1994

They were donated to the Elba Library by Nell Gilmer, who obtained them from Jake's great niece, Melissa Jones Anderson. Her mother was Margaret English Jones, daughter of Corinne Bonneau English and Foy English.

Presented to the Elba City Library

August 1, 2019

by
Nell Gilmer

REMEMBERING WITH JAKE

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CHIEF

(Con)

THE ELBA CLIPPER MARCH 11, 1993

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Most people, even the ones who are not church goers, prefer to live in communities with the stabilizing influence of churches.

There was no Missionary Baptist church in Elba until 1882. Prior to that year, the nearest one was New Providence. It was located about one mile east of Elba at what now is the intersection of the New Brockton and Samson Highway. It became inactive and was sold to a black congregation for a token amount. It now is Greater New Zion Baptist Church.

The Elba Baptist church was built on the location of the present Elba Clipper building. It faced east on North Court. As most churches of that era, services were not held full time.

In 1913 a new church was built on the corner of Simmons and Polka.

This was erected by W. E. Ferdue, one of Elba's early builders. He built a number of store buildings around the Court House Square. This church survived the March 1929 flood. This beautiful old church, with Cathedral ceilings was demolished and the present First Baptist Church was moved into in December of 1949. The name was changed from the Elba Baptist Church to the First Baptist Church in 1950.

The original Elba Baptist Church, on North Court, after it was vacated for many years was used as a mule stable.

I think, and hope, that the citizens of Elba enjoy knowing something of its history.

Sincerely,
Jake Bonneau

Dear Editor,

For many years people of the community buried their own dead. By necessity, lots of the people were carpenters and they built the caskets and boxes for burial.

Every community had a leader that took charge of the details. Men were prepared, bathed and dressed by men, women were prepared by women. The men dug the grave and saw that appropriate services were conducted.

In Elba, John Moore Bonneau was in the hardware business, and he began to see a need for ready made caskets. His hardware store was a two story building on the east side of the square. He had a casket display room built upstairs and installed a freight elevator, hand operated, to carry the caskets and boxes up and down.

The caskets were all wooden and cloth covered, with the interior unfurnished. They picked out the type of interior they wanted and it was completed there. That was called "dressing the casket."

The mules and wagon had been left in the alley in back of the store. The casket and box was loaded on the wagon and they carried it with them and the funeral took place as usual.

As time passed, there were requests for Mr. Bonneau to handle the funerals. By doing that, he became Elba's first funeral director. In addition to his other affairs, he decided to go into the funeral business. In the 1920's he sent one of his employees, Comer DeVane, to Atlanta, Georgia to become Elba's first embalmer. The first funeral home in Elba was Bonneau-Jeter Funeral Home.

In Enterprise, Mr. Polk Searcy had already taken a correspondence course and had become Coffee County's first embalmer. His grand children still operate Searcy Funeral Home in Enterprise.

There is a vast difference in yesterday's ways and today's.

Jake Bonneau

Sunday Montgomery Advertiser

LETTERS TO THE

EDITOR

SECTION

SUNDAY



May 23, 1993

True Believer Clarifies Record

I am tired of seeing articles written by people who never knew Jim Folsom Sr. I was one of 28 people on the dedication committee for the Folsom Administrative Building on Jan. 19, 1987.

I campaigned with him in 1954 from Tennessee to Florida. He was a visionary and crusader. At times he acted like a buffoon.

That was a different era — six, eight or more speeches every day and they were all the same, from the Black Belt to Winston County.

He preached "One Man-One Vote" when it was a terrible idea for the white voters of the Black Belt, and there were only white voters there at that time.

Lowndes County only voted about 1,000 voters. They voted for him because he was a man of the people and for the people.

He never said, "I stole for myself." He pointed a long finger and moved it around to the crowd and said, "I stole for you and you and you." Sadly he wasn't interested in providing money for his own estate.

He was one of a kind and my kind of an "intelligent nut."

Jake Bonneau
Elba

THE ELBA CLIPPER APRIL 8, 1992

Dear Marvin,

Another continuation of Elba's past.

We were fortunate to have an excellent cabinet maker. Sam Reeves had his shop on the ground floor of a two story wooden building on Claxton Ave. It was on the south end of the lot where Johnson OK Tire Store is now. The upstairs of the wooden structure was occupied by Elba Masonic Lodge #176 and the Eastern Stars. Mr. Reeves made caskets when requested to do so. Much of his beautiful furniture is still being used by people far and near. There were no burial vaults available at that time but Elba had two master brick masons. Both were black men, Ernest Lane and Whit Caper. When a family desired, and could afford, a brick vault, either of them would stop the job they were on and build a burial vault. They were very well built and many of them are in the old section of Evergreen Cemetery. There are at least five in the Bonneau Family Plot. Ernest Lane was the brick mason that laid the brick for the two story building on the east side of the square that is now part of Skinner Furniture Co.

John M. Bonneau also began the first funeral service for blacks in Elba. Bonneau-Jeter Funeral Parlor was formed in the early 1930's and was located at 215 N. Claxton where Thomason Carpet was. The first black funeral director was W.A. Felton until his early death from heart problems. Next was R.C. Balkum for a short time. Robert "Rabbit" Reynolds was there for many years. By assisting Comer DeVane he learned to embalm.

I think it is interesting to know that Sam Reeves built a hearse body for use by Bonneau-Jeter Funeral Parlor. It could be mounted, and removed when not in use, on a 1 1/2 ton truck frame. This was during the early 30's and the heart of the Great Depression. A rather ingenious way to save money.

I trust that the people of today will find it somewhat amazing that the past worked rather well.

Sincerely,
Jake Bonneau

THE ELBA CLIPPER APRIL 15, 1993

Dear Marvin,

When I started to school in September of 1926 there was a two story brick building just east of the Elba High School building. It was an old building at that time. What I remember most of all were the two rooms and either side in the rear of the building that were rest rooms. You walked down several steps into them. They were all concrete and smelled to high heaven.

By 1926 there was only a concrete slab in the front of the building that had at one time been a roofed porch leading up a number of steps into the building. The hallways were rather wide and steps went upstairs on both sides. Grades 1-6 were held there. Upstairs was the only auditorium in Elba. All of the large group gatherings were held up there. School activities as well as any other social affairs of Elba. Including traveling group to put on paid to view affairs. Of course the church had their own buildings. The auditorium became unsafe for large crowds. They were afraid it would collapse so in 1935 a new auditorium was built onto the Elba High School.

This old elementary school was demolished and a new one story building was built in 1946-47. It was at that time considered the Elementary School.

The Elba High School building was built in about 1920. Since these buildings were built there were several additions made to them including a gym.

The vocational building next to South Trust was built in 1935-36.

The elementary building on the Troy Highway was built in 1965-66. The Middle school next to the levee was completed in August 1972.

With a complete new school system having been erected since the March 14, 1990 flood, I thought it would be prudent to establish these dates so future generations would know.

The Mulberry Heights schools closed and the Elba School Systems were fully integrated in the 1969070 school years.

I am indebted to former Supt. of Education, Elmer Taylor, for much of this information.

Sincerely,
Jake Bonneau

THE ELBA CLIPPER APRIL 15, 19

Dear Marvin,

THE ELBA CLIPPER APRIL 22, 1993

The day before they were cooked, I would tie the turkey's feet with a rope and hang it up on a limb in the back yard. Take a real sharp knife and cut the head and run fast to keep blood from getting all over me. After they drained good they were ready to be plucked and dressed.

In about 1946-47 the first milk began to be delivered from house to house in Elba. John N. Wallace, who married Alice Stephens and lived at Richburg, near New Brockton, started the first dairy that came to Elba. By the way, the Wallace's were related to the Dorseys, Hayeses and Stephens of Elba. As a young lad, Charles P. Hayes III (Charlie) helped Alva Lee McIntosh deliver milk. Glass bottled milk was all we had. A cardboard stopper that fit all sizes of bottles was used on top. He had regular customers. You put your quart and pint bottles out front every night and early the next morning your milk was delivered. If you wanted cream for whipping you placed a half pint bottle out. The amount of milk was delivered according to the bottles placed out. The first of the month a bill was left with the milk and you left the money in a bottle to be picked up the next morning.

All soft drinks were in long, ice filled cases, the lids lifted up. All glass bottles and not coin operated. The older can reminisce and the young can learn.

Sincerely,
Jake Bonneau

Dear Editor,

In my last letter, I stated that I started to school in 1926. I should have added, "The same year that our beloved, Professor James C. Dixon came to Elba, to head the school system, for many, many years."

For a long time nearly every family in Elba had at least one milk cow. It was almost a necessity. There were no dairies, no oleo, and very few dependable ways to get milk and butter. There were a few families that had a few cows and sold milk and butter and buttermilk.

On the Troy Road, where Cook Chevrolet now is located, there was an area owned by Wiley Bullard. This was 5 or 6 feet lower than the road and known as Bullard's Meadow. It encompassed several acres. Many people in the area milked their cows in the morning and paid a small fee to Mr. Bullard to take them to pasture for the day. They would go back in late afternoon and bring them home to milk and put them in the stall overnight.

Nearly everyone raised chickens. We were fortunate enough to have a large lot spacious enough for cows and chickens. There was a barn with a chicken house attached. Mary Patty and her son, George Patty, milked for the Bonneau's for many years.

The only chickens that were not raised at home were kept in a coop behind the grocery stores. You had to buy them, take them home, kill and dress them. Before Thanksgiving and Christmas you would locate some farmer that raise turkeys and engage one in advance. A week or so before the day to use them you brought them home and placed them in a fattening coop.

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Lake Bonneau



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

I have known of W. B. Perdue all of my life. I knew his son, Dana Perdue and his wife, Frances. She taught me "Expression" in grammar school. Today, I think it would be called "Speech". I knew their children, Frank Dana and his brother, Billy. Dana kept a rowboat tied up on Pea River, back of his house, on Plant Avenue in New Town. We roamed up and down the river during our early years.

W. B. Perdue was one of the giants of Elba's early history. He was born in November of 1858 and died in December of 1934. He is buried in Elba Evergreen Cemetery. He came to Elba from Crenshaw County. He lived on Plant Avenue in a large house with the most Victorian wood work on it of any home in Elba. Back of his home, and extending on down the river, he had a Wood Planer Mill, a dry kiln, and a woodworking or cabinet shop. Down further, and across what is now the canal, dug through there after the flood of 1929, was Elba's only Brick Mill with its kiln to harden the brick. All of his equipment was powered by steam.

He had his own Brick Mill Quarters with 8 or 10 houses. I'm listing some of the families that lived there. Ernest Lane was there when his daughter, Gladys Lane Mincy was born on July 26, 1900. At one time or the other the following lived there: Pete Simmons, John Blue, Laymon Thigpen, Georganne Harper, Roland Marshal, Mollie Medley, Anna Jones, Lucy Brooks and her daughter, Fannie, Bill and Rosie Hammonds, Sam and Mae Magwood. I want to thank Annie Pearl Harper and Gladys Lane Mincy for helping with this part.

It is difficult to know of all the many buildings he constructed. I believe he built the Judge S. N. Rowe home, across from the City Hall. I know he built the first Black schoolhouse and Bethel AME Church. These buildings were off the Troy road, across from the present Church of Christ. A small dirt lane turned off to the right through trees a short distance to a two story wooden building on the left. This was the

orate the church and Sunday School. These were about 8 or 10 feet wide, and several of them. When you had an overflow crowd at church, they were raised to accommodate the crowd.

There was a single door entrance going into the Sunday School Dept., down Simmons Street. There was also a single door entrance going into the Pastor's Study on Folka Street. To me, it was a beautiful building with superb craftsmanship and the work of artisans.

In 1949, the powers to be in the Baptist Church decided we needed a new church. This church was only 36 years old. The most revered and gorgeous churches and cathedrals in Europe are 800 to 1,000 years old. I thank the good Lord that I was inbred with a sense of history and aesthetics.

I was baptized in that church just short of my 10th birthday in late 1929. Bro. B. S. Franklin was pastor. My father, John Moore Bonneau, died March 11, 1942 and was a deacon in that church at the time of his death. His funeral was held there.

I was only 29 years old in 1949, but was President of Bonneau-eter Hardware Co. I offered to sell, at cost, the building material for the new church that I did not approve of at all, but the men in charge were old enough to be my father. I felt that it would be disrespectful to disagree. By necessity, I had to meet with them often. On one occasion, they were talking about what kind of windows to use in the new church. I said, "You have beautiful stained glass windows." They replied that they were no good. The frames were rotting, and the lead was sagging. I said to give me a little time to see what could be done. I found a company in Atlanta, Georgia that could remake them. I told the church builders, I believe it was Hollman from Ozark, where to send the crated windows. They came back in probably better shape than new. I am sorry to say that I did not save the ones in the Sunday School Dept. They were placed in the old pastorum, built when S. O. Y. Ray was pastor in 1901. That was on the corner of

school. Black Masonic meetings were held upstairs. The Bethel AME Church across the clearing was where the funeral of Elba's first Black funeral director, W. A. Felton, was held. The entire Bonneau family attended the services and sat with the Felton family. Bonneau-Jeter Funeral Home handled the funeral, and Comer Devane directed it.

Mr. W. B. Perdue built the two story brick building that I started school in. I have learned that many of the older citizens of Elba graduated from school there, in the upstairs auditorium. He built the Methodist Church that stands on the corner of W. Davis and Claxton Avenue. This church has a corner stone that reads as follows:

M. E. Church South
Oct. 16, 1909
Matthews and Clark
Architects
Building Committee
W. B. Perdue
M. J. Lee
I. T. Law

In my opinion this is still the most beautiful church in Elba.

Mr. Perdue built many of the buildings around the Courthouse Square. Of course, it stands to reason that if he had his own planer mill, his own cabinet shop and his own brick mill that he would use his own materials in his construction work.

In 1913, the Baptists decided to build a church on the corner of Simmons and Polka. I feel that in a friendly, Christian way, they wanted to do a little better than the Methodists, so they engaged W. B. Perdue to build their new church. He did a wonderful job.

The entrance was from both streets. Steps went around both sides up about 6 feet. Double doors, on each side, entered into a vestibule with a white marble floor. It was large enough for a casket to lie in state for viewing. The spire, with its bell tower, rose above this. The pull rope for the bell hung in there. Double doors entered into the sanctuary. You, therefore, entered the corner of the church. Directly in front as you entered, the pulpit was down the center aisle straight ahead.

The floors were concave until they reached near the front and flattened out. The benches, or pews, were made to the contour of the floor. This made it so that there was not really a bad seat in the church.

The sanctuary had stained glass windows with reds, blues, and oranges. The Sunday School Dept., which I will describe shortly, had earth colors. Primarily tans, yellow ochre, etc.

The sanctuary had cathedral ceilings that went so high that in the apex, facing Davis Street, was the round stained glass window, now up high in the present church. There were accordion like partitions that could be pushed up and down to sep-

Claxton and Builord, when the Piggy Wiggly bought that property. Jack R. Brunson bought the old parlorium and moved it for rental property. His wife, Edna, received enough of the pieces to have a small accent window made for her home.

Many Sundays, as I have sat in church with the sun shining through those beautiful windows, I have thought, "Well, you have done at least one thing that you can take pride in doing."

W. B. Perdue retired in 1924. Billy Ward, through a lease arrangement, ran the planer mill, dry kiln, and other wood works. Frank Harris Murphree did the same thing for the brick works. The flood of March 14, 1929 brought an end to it all.

W. B. Perdue's funeral was held from the United Methodist Church, in which he built. In his eulogy, the pastor said, "A king has fallen."

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REMEMBERING
WITH JAKE
PAGE 3

May 13, 1993

Elba

THE ELBA CLIPPER MAY 13, 1993

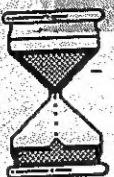
Dear Marvin,

Jimmy is very sick, I hope and pray that he does recover! He has been, and is, an institution in Elba. I believe he is 67 years old.

He loves to eat and everyone tries to please him and has come very close to killing him with love. His memory of things past is amazing. He remembers, in detail, things that occurred 50 years ago.

I'll tell one amusing event that happened in about 1946. We had a lily pool with flowing well water running into it. It was oval shaped, about 8 feet wide and 15 feet long. We had placed small goldfish in it and everyday some one in the family went there and threw them a handful of oatmeal. I never heard of fish food in those days. These fish, with running fresh water, grew to at least 1 1/2 pounds. Many people came to see them. Dogs and cats were trying to get them. One day, someone was screaming, "Mrs. Bonneau, Mrs. Bonneau!!" Mother yelled for me and I ran out to the pool. Jimmy was looking at the goldfish and fell in. It was only about 3 feet deep, but he was thrashing about thinking he was about to drown. I pulled him out. He was not big at that time. The Joe Young family lived next door to us. Mrs. Young was Evie Foley, a sister to Levy Foley, Jimmy's father. She dried him off and took care of him. Of course, Jimmy has told me about that event at least 200 times. There have been people better known in Elba, at one time or another, than Jimmy, but no one that has had the ability to be known and loved for so long a time. Few brilliant and talented people make such an indelible mark as Jimmy Foley. He has never learned to hate, only to love. Wouldn't it be a great world if everyone did that.

Jake Bonneau



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

"Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink," certainly does not apply to Elba. We have three different streams of water coming into Elba. Some of our memories of fishing, boating, even swimming evoke pleasant times on our creeks and river. But there are times we would like to forget. Those horrendous floods that we would love to black out.

The headwaters of the Pea River is near Union Springs in Bullock County. The headwaters of White Water Creek is north of U. S. #231, between Troy and Brundidge, in Pike County. Beaver Dam Creek headwaters in northwest Coffee County about 3 miles northwest of the Sharpless Christmas Tree and real nice peach orchard farms. This was Marvin Sharpless' place. His son Ralph married Patsy Pinckard. John Waylon Sharpless married Sara Dyess. John Waylon lived in a double pin log house until he was 13 years old and they moved to this place.

Water streams were the first available source of power for operating almost all types of equipment. Grist mills were essential to living in the early years. A few miles made a lot of difference in the days of either walking or riding a mule and wagon. Few had horses and buggy. People grew corn more for their own use than for sale. They took it to the grist mill to be ground into corn meal or even into grits. Corn bread was used all of the time. Many times it was used three times a day. It was good, it was inexpensive, and it was available. Most millers would grind the corn between two great stones that had grooves cut into them that ground the corn into any degree of fine or coarse the person desired. A good miller knew how to regulate the pressure to do this. Of course, the largest stream coming into Elba was Pea River, next White Water, and then Beaver Dam. The nearest mill that I ever heard of, in the old water ground days, was Taylor's Mill on Beaver Dam. You must remember those days, the location of the

Elba Country Club was out in the country. William Taylor started a dam and mill on Beaver Dam when he went into the Confederate Army during the War Between The States.

roads, is the old creek bed. On down below is another fill on Putman. This is the last street next to the levee on the south side of Elba. The creek entered Pea River there. On the Opp Highway, just before you cross the bridge over the canal, to the right is Jackson Street. You cross another fill there. That was the creek bed also. If you look behind the Transformer Electric Station, down into the old creek bed there are large sections of concrete sticking up out of the ground. In the summer, vines and undergrowth cover them. In the winter, when the vegetation is dead, they are clearly visible. This is where the first Ice Plant in Elba was located.

I could write a book on ice and the great good that came when it became available. My next column will be about ice, the making and effects it had on the lives of people. Right now, I need to finish the part of Elba's service to its people.

Remember in the 1920's and 1930's the town was not very big and primarily confined to the flat area that composes the old Elba. Our garbage was picked up by a Black man, Willis Harper, he had a mule and wagon, a shovel, and a pitch fork. This was all he needed. People burned the combustible material in fireplaces or wood stoves or in back yards or streets. No one threw anything away that they could find a use for, and they were very ingenious in finding a use for everything. After all, this was a time when a grown man, with a family, was glad to get a job for 5 dollars a week. That was a 6 day week and 10 hours or more every day. Willis Harper always seemed to be a jovial and happy man. He lived in a house back of what is now Hardees. He would have his mule and wagon ready to go by 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning and he would come out by Newton Street, beside our house, and always singing in a loud and clear voice. His favorite seemed to be "Lord Come By Here". Every Christmas morning he came by the house and said "Christmas Gift", and of course, we responded.

It was not completed until he returned. Probably in late 1865. His mill was just north of the first bridge the other side of the Country Club. He also built a cotton gin there and had a country store. The road going to the mill began to be called the Taylor Mill Road and it is that until this day. Several other Taylors ran the mill over the years, including John, Duke, and others unknown to me.

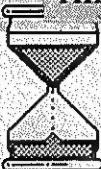
William Taylor was the great-great grandfather of Mike Taylor. The family can figure the relationship from there. The Beaver Dam Creek ran straight through Elba.

In those days of the 1920's, and even into the 1930's, the roads were dirt. They were made with very little more than man power, a mule and a slip scrape. I had better explain what a slip scrape was. It was heavy metal, about 30" wide and 36" long. The back came up 14" with rounded corners that went forward, sloping down to the front to about 6". Two wooden handles were attached. On to each side that extended 30" out of the back. A man took the handles and lifted the back and up so the front end would go into the ground. The mule would pull the scrape until it was full and the man took this into the road and dumped it. This way, the dirt was taken out to form the ditch to run water off and the road was formed. What ever kind of dirt that was there was what was used. Sand, clay, or what was there. There was no mechanized machinery. Farmers used them to build terraces.

I want to tell an amusing story that my father told. It apparently occurred in the 1920's. I've told how roads were. I recall a house that was on the Taylor Mill Road, where the golf course comes up to the road. I believe that was the Sam Taylor house. At any rate, he and his young son had been into town on his Model T Ford. He, like many others, had a couple of drinks. He was not far from home when his tires got out of the two sand bed ruts and the car eased into the ditch. The ditch had a sandy bank where it had been dug out. There were pedals in the floor board for forward and reverse. He tried to back it out and got a few feet and it stopped. He then ran forward so he could try again. Each time the front fender hit the bank. His son said, "Pa, I spect tomorrow you are gonna hate this." Sam said, "Son, tell you the truth, I hate it a litt'l' bit already."

I'm sure there has been more than one Sam Taylor. I thought it was such a good story that I have remembered it for about 60 years.

Now, back to Beaver Dam Creek. It came through Elba. The large area that is filled in on Simmons, going to the intersection of Opp and Kinston.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

When I read what I wrote about Coffee County Training School, realized that I did not explain it enough. I was president of SCAMHB, composed of Covington, Coffee, Crenshaw and Butler counties. I was president October 1981 - October 1983. This facility takes adult retarded people and teaches them to the limit of their abilities. Their parents are usually content to wait on them and let them remain as they are. We take them and teach them to count money, make change, do laundry, do arts and crafts. Each to their own ability. It is heart warming to see their faces, when they see what they can do that they were not aware they were capable of doing.

I need to go further in explaining the water coming to Elba. Beaver Dam went into Pea River where you cross the filled in area where Putnam Street becomes Plant Street. They just changed names. Putnam starts at the levee nearest the east side and Plant stops at the Southwest side of the levee at what is now the Beaver Dam Canal. When you go past Dorsey's, on US 84 just before you cross the canal bridge, there is a street that turns to the right. That is Jackson Street. It leads into Mulberry Heights. To your left, as you cross the fill leaving #84, you will see water coming up to the fill (road), to the right it is several times deeper. That is because the dam was there and the fall of the water eroded it very far down. That location was Elba's first ice plant. It will take so long to tell about ice that I will get back to that.

The wheels of most government agencies turn very slow. After the flood of March 14, 1929 it was decided Elba needed protection from another devastating flood. This I am sure that had something to do with the go ahead decision. The Corps of Engineers probably didn't start the work until about the middle of 1934. The work was slow. There was hardly any mechanized machinery. Much of it was done with scoops, wheel barrows, dip scrapers. There was a steam power road grader. It had cables to dig it to the day and place it into a large wooden type

container that funneled the clay into a dump truck body. Much of the clay came from the Brunson hill area. Hayes Funeral Home sits in the area that was once a high clay hill. The canal was dug with the drag lines. I'm sure that much of that also went into the levee. Theodore Winston was manager for Kershaw Construction Co., Birmingham, AL. A Mr. Duncan worked for Mr. Winston. Arthur Claire Brunson (Bud) II married Elizabeth Winston during this time. The canal diverted the water that had run through Elba so that it was carried around Elba. The levee was built inside of the Elba side. Pea River and Whitewater were left outside. Anything the other side of the levee was unprotected. I remember vividly the flood of March 14, 1929. There was little way of communication in those days. Most people had seen a little high water. Sometimes the water came up almost one foot high around the Court House Square. Young men would take row boats and paddle them around the surface. I was not deep enough to paddle. That is what was expected in 1929. I am sorry if I ramble, but I write as I usually talk. Doris Whitman Pinckard says that I recall the '29 flood better than anyone she ever knew. Perhaps I will tell in detail about it.

Now, back to the levee and related events. When the 1929 flood occurred, there was just one way to leave downtown Elba and go to Opp. (The only bridge crossed Beaver Dam and Putnam) and Plant. The last street nearest Pea River. This was a wooden bridge. When you went over the bridge you went straight ahead down Plant until you reached Caroline, turned to the right and came out at the John Brown place. The Brown place is no longer there. Now you would say by Elba Ford Tractor Co. You could also turn right after you crossed the bridge and go to Reese and turn left and go to Caroline. Hickman (U. S. 84) did not go up the hill that now crosses the canal. No bridge was

there, because there was, at that time, no canal. The levee and canal were inseparable. The bridge was built to cross the canal on what is now Hickman (U. S. 84 West) and they dug out the remainder of the dirt that allowed Beaver Dam to be diverted into the canal. Then the dam was built so that the water could no longer go through town. This dam formed the street that is now Jackson, that leads into Mulberry.

After the bridge across the canal was built, they then dug out an opening through the high clay hill to give a better way to Opp and Danley's Cross Roads and going West. This was all a two lane street and road, including the bridge for a long time. I recall that I was having lunch one day with Governor George Wallace and Cornelia at the mansion, and he asked me how the four laning of Elba US 84 West was coming along and I told him it was progressing nicely and we did appreciate his concern. He was shot on May 15, 1972 in Maryland, so when we discussed the four laning must have been in 1970 or close to that. I have attempted to tell why and how the levee came about. We felt fairly secure until March 17, 1990.

Oh, I don't believe, to the best of my knowledge, the levee and opening of the highway to Opp was completed until 1937.

Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

THE ELBA CLIPPER

JUNE 3, 1993

Alabama was admitted to the union as a state in 1819. It was sparsely populated. Most of the population at that time was in North Alabama and South Alabama, Mobile because of its easy access to the Gulf of Mexico.

There is an area of Alabama called the Black Belt. It is a sad, but true story; many people think the Black Belt is called that because of its large black population. No, it is called that for the rich, black soil that was deposited there thousands of years ago. It begins with a broad band of land that encompasses Pickens, Greene, Sumter, and Choctaw counties along the Mississippi border. It runs through Alabama and curves downward until it narrows off at the Georgia border. I'm pretty sure that by that time it encompassed only part of Russell, all of Barbour, and part of Henry counties. This rich, black soil that grew cotton in unbelievable amounts began to become known and the people began to leave their own states to come to the Black Belt. It was black gold.

My great-great grandfather, Col. William Henry Bonneau Sr., and his wife, Anna Maria Swinton Bonneau, and several of their 15 children, left Charleston, South Carolina and came to Lowndes County in 1830. The word got back to South Carolina, and they started leaving from not only Charleston, but all areas around there. The U.S.A. was not very populated, so word of a better place, spread quickly.

The Bonneaus came from the low country, as that area of South Carolina is called. It had marshes and plenty of water. It was a major producer of rice. They even exported rice to Europe. Col. Bonneau, at one time, had a rice plantation in one location, and a cotton plantation in another. The high country of South Carolina, is around Greenville and Spartanburg. My mother's folks, the Tills [redacted] also left and came to Lowndes. At one time Lowndes County, Alabama was the financial and cultural center of Alabama.

The vast cotton fields, all across the rich soil grew cotton so big that my mother, who was born on November 16, 1884, told me that when visiting her grandfather, John Till in Lowndes County, that children would actually climb the cotton stalks. Jacob Granville Till, my grandfather, would take his buggy and drive my mother from their home in Greenville, AL to visit his father, in the summer months. I am

glad she told me something of the way they lived more than 130 years ago. John Till's plantation was in the Dutch Bend Community. Indian Creek ran through his property. Water power was about the only thing that they had to use. He had his own cotton gin on that creek.

This next that I learned is what amazed me. When they ginned the cotton, they took shovels and pushed the cotton seed into the creek. They only saved enough for next year's crop. Today, they get cotton seed oil and cotton seed meal.

They could not make a profit on cotton alone. I am sure that they used hog lard for frying, as everyone did at that time. I suppose no one had thought of the value of anything but cotton. It was the white gold of that rich black soil that was so productive. I have not told this. All of this massive cotton was made without adding fertilizer. All profit.

Another thing that I learned was how people are ingenious enough to solve problems that arise. They dug wells for water and found that that water was too alkaline for drinking. They rigged wooden gutters along the eaves of the roof and a trough to run the water into an underground cistern to hold the rain water so it was available for drinking and cooking. The alkaline water was used for bathing and washing clothes, and anything that did not require pure water.

Slavery ended in 1865, so all of this occurred in about 1890-1895. My mother referred to herself as a young girl.

Slavery was, and is, an abomination to mankind. The plantation owners needed the workers, the slave traders, many of whom were New Englanders, made the money. Even some tribal chiefs sold their own people into slavery. The Bible says in I Timothy, verse 10. "The love of money is the root of all evils." That is what brought about slavery in the United States. They Holy Bible speaks of slavery existing in Biblical times, and this enlightened age of 1993. It is sad to say that there are parts of the world where it still is in practice. If anyone ever told you that this is "fair and just ol' world," they lied to you. It never has been and we pray and hope that someday it might. Please don't get your hopes up.

P. S. The last section of Alabama to be settled was the Southeastern part. That is what I am leading up to next.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

When Alabama became a state in December of 1819, the southeastern section was the most sparsely populated area. One county was formed that went from the Georgia border on the east, past Andalusia to Conecuh County on the west. From the Florida border to Pike County in the north. As time went on, people moved in and that huge county that had been named Henry County, became too unwieldy and distances so far apart that with no modern transportation it had to be broken down. It was not done all at one time. A large Hale County was formed out of Henry and then in December of 1841 Coffee County was formed out of Dale County. Henry County is called by some people, the Grandmother of Coffee, and Dale County called the Mother of Coffee County. People began to move, at a slow rate, into Coffee County in 1840-1850. Lots of them came from Georgia, of course, it was one of the original 13 colonies that made up the first United States. This section of the state had the most long leaf yellow pines if any other. I believe it was due to the climate and soil. Most of our soil is a sandy loam. Of course, some of it is clay and some sand. These pines had never been cut, but there were vast forests of them. Some were 4 feet in diameter and 100 feet tall. There was a small portion of the tree, directly under the bark, that was softer than the heart, which was hard as a rather tough rock. As it grew, that part became yellow pine. It really was known as lighterwood. Why--I don't know. It was very heavy and extremely easy to set fire. It burned a real hot flame and smoked heavily. As settlers moved in, they cut some trees to build homes. Some used a foot adze to cut timbers for house foundations

and toward Pea River, and across toward Damascus, remains the most productive land in the county.

These huge pine trees spawned another industry. Turpentining made a good living for lots of families. They had a special tool that would cut a deep V-shaped place through the bark into the tree a couple of inches. Attached to this "V" was a metal shaped device just under the metal. This directed the sap to take their choice of land. They homesteaded it by living on it draining from it into a metal cup under the end of the "V". This was re-looked at the land around Danleys Cross Roads and Curtis and decided that it was too low and level. The to the Turpentine Still. There it was made from sap droppings into a very saleable product. Turpentine. This was very much in demand as a solvent and thinner for paints, medicine, and other things, including achil- distilleries were in several locations. Of course, many of these huge virgin piles to make land for cultivation.

The population of the Wiregrass was rather slow in growing. I had best tell how our area began to be called the Wiregrass. There was a very tough grass that grew in small clumps in only sandy loam soil. It was so strong that it began to be called wiregrass. I remember, not too many years ago, when there was a small amount to be found in the Bonneau yard. I suppose mowing, weed killers, and a host of other things have all but done away with it. I don't recall seeing any in quite some time. I am sure that some of it is left. I don't know of anyone that would miss it. Not even the cattle.

Before World War II, if there were brick houses outside of towns, I don't remember them. Very few in towns. Every farm family kept their yards free of any grass of any kind.

Even boards were often cut one at a time with a cross cut, two man, saw. There were no bricks available, so they would saw a tree that was about 2 feet or more in diameter into short 30" sections to lay the sills on to hold the house off of the ground. Very few houses were ceiled inside. Only one room would have a fireplace and it often was made of small pieces of wood that formed the chimney. This was packed with mud thick enough to keep the wood from catching on fire. This was called the

There was at least two reasons that. There was no lawn mowers, except the reel type, pushed with power. But the best reason was farm families worked in the field and if no one was at home and it was a real danger of catching a fire and burning the house. In the fall of the year if they had, or could find gallberry patch they cut those leaves off and tied the bunches together with hay baling wire. made a bushy broom that was strong and helped keep grass from coming up. If gallberry was not available they would use young dogwood trees that served the same purpose.

The 1930's was a violent era in Elba. Nearly every Christmas for several years in a row, someone was shot and killed on the square.

Alabama and Coffee County were large cotton producers for a time. In 1893, Alabama produced 2,340,000 acres of cotton. Georgia was the only other true state to have more and then, not much. They had 2,440,000 acres

I had better stop here and continue in another column. There is time to tell about Coffee County. Son it has to be about politics.

THE ELBA CLIPPER JUNE 10, 1993

Dear Editor,

Thelma Folsom Clark was born at the old Folsom farm that had been settled by her forefathers in 1830. She was born November 17, 1896. She married John Ross Clark. She never had children of her own, but her motherly instinct made her a mother to people of all ages. She was kind, considerate, and lovingly caring for all. She and Ross reared her nephew, Charles Ellis. Charles and Betty Joyce's daughter, Amy, lived with her for a while before the 1990 Flood. She baked wonderful pound cakes and always shared them. She often visited my mother in her later years. When her brother, "Big Jim" was Governor, she baked lady fingers, sand tarts, and other fancy foods, in quantities large enough for receptions and parties at the Mansion. She often drove up and carried them herself. She was always down to earth in all of her actions. Never in the least pretentious. When her mother died shortly before Big Jim became Governor, she became, and accepted the role very graciously, as Matriarch of the Folsom Family. She was a wonderful lady and I proudly proclaimed her as my friend. Rest in peace.

Love,



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau



Every family, of any consequence, had a smoke house. On the first really cold spell there was hog killing time. Neighbors usually helped each other with this. It was a big job. Several hogs were killed. They had to be slaughtered, hung up and gutted, cleaned out, hot water heated in wash pots so the hogs could be scraped to get the hair off. Skinned and cut into appropriate pieces. The liver, lungs, and kidneys were all saved and used. They made several different dishes that were all very tasteful. Salt was part of the preservation of the meat. Much of it was smoked in the smoke house. Hog entrails were turned inside out and washed thoroughly and meat was seasoned after it had been ground up with a sausage grinder. These sausages were placed on a rack in the smoke house and smoked. In the process, lots of fat dropped onto the dirt floor. We had a sausage stuffer, made to put the meat into the guts that held them. I have no idea how it could be done any other way. Lots of the meat, after it was smoked, was placed into 5 gallon lard cans. These cans were tin coated with a tight fitting lid. The meat was placed into the can and lard poured over it. This made it keep better and kept it free of bugs and worms. Of course, the lard was used for cooking.

People, especially in the country, had to be rather self sufficient. The country, it is hard to realize, started not any further than two miles from town. You must have corn meal. Nearly all homes had a year round garden of some type. Collards and onions would grow better in winter than most stuff. Sweet potatoes were a must.

a warm place and found it. They got a wash pan and filled it with kerosene and a hand full of salt. He placed his hand in the mixture and Essie Green and Auburn Carroll drove him as fast as they could to Dr. Oscar Edge in Troy. The mixture slopped out all over him on the fast run to Troy. He was a very sick man with an arm and hand swollen to a huge size. We believe this happened in 1942.

Let's change over to an entirely different topic. In late 1948, Flournoy Whitman was Coffee County Commissioner of the Elba District. At that time, each commissioner was responsible for his own district. Flournoy came to see me one day and tol me that all of the main roads of Elba had been paved except the Kinston road. It had been used as a political football and it was high time something was done to get it black topped. He knew the Governor, "Big Jim" Folsom, and I were good personal friends. He took the oath of office in January of 1946. Flournoy asked me if I could arrange a meeting for him to talk to the Governor on one of his frequent visits to Elba and the old Folsom Home on Hickman, next to Dorsey Trailers. John Ross Clark had married Thelma Folsom, and they lived in the old home. I often knew when the Governor would be in town. One day I called my dear friend, Thelma Clark, and told her to please call me when Jim got there. She did and I called Flournoy and picked him up and we went over and parked in the back, as usual, and went into the kitchen. A large oak table was there in the same place it has been as long as I could remember. The Governor was drinking a beer. I introduced them, and

A potato hill was usually about 4 to 5 feet long were arranged into a teepee style with boards over lapping. Dirt was applied to a small portion on the South side so you could take one board off to get into the hill. Potatoes and pine straw were placed inside. This kept them from rotting and freezing. Usually an old bucket or foot tub was placed on top to make it water tight. A family could eat very well and a pretty good balanced meal without having to go buy anything from the store. Of course everyone did a lot of canning of vegetables as well as fruits as they became ready. They were of great use when the garden or orchard was not in production.

About 50 years ago, I heard of Rex Lowery getting bit by a rattlesnake while getting potatoes out of the hill. I remember my father saying that he was not afraid of but two things, "A rattlesnake and a mad dog." I agree. The Lowery's have always lived at Wilkinstown in north Coffee County on Highway #87. Mrs. Lowery was born there. She was Maudie Ray Grimes. Rex died a few years ago. I called Mrs. Lowery and she recalled that event very well. Rex was out in the garden and she was cooking back bacon and wanted some sweet potatoes. She called out to him to bring some in the house. Someone had left a board off of the potato hill and when he reached in to pull them out the snake bit him on the hand. The snake was looking for being the perfect host, he popped a beer open and handed it to Flournoy. I observed this very keenly, knowing Flournoy was a teetotaler. Being the consummate politician, he took the beer and they discussed the paving of the Kinston highway. The Governor did every thing he could for his home county. He told Flournoy to meet him in his office the next morning at 10:00 a.m. and he would have the state highway director there. I am pretty sure it was Herman Nelson. I checked with Lomax Fullford and he says the plans in his office for that highway were drawn up in 1949. I checked with Roy Barlow and he says that the road was paved in 1949. When the Governor takes a personal interest, things get done in a hurry. I looked closely when Flournoy placed the bottle of beer to his mouth. I know he got a taste of it, but I never did see him swallow.

I could, and may do it, write several columns on the colorful Folsom family and what they meant to Coffee County.

It is rather amazing how we are prone to over look the obvious. I should never assume that anyone would know something. Fact in point. I had not said that every family had at least one milk cow and a flock of chickens. These were essential. Hardly anyone ate much beef. There was no refrigeration. Pork, chicken, and eggs were the primary source of protein along with milk.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

Leon Augustus Boyd was born in Georgia on November 14, 1861. He started building his fortune in the cross tie business in Georgia. The railroads were the only means of mass transportation of people and goods. He had men making several thousand a month with foot adzes and axes. I have already described the turpentine business. When he came to Alabama in 1900, he engaged in the turpentine business and after the trees had been used for that he began a large saw mill operation at Richburg, near New Brockton. He built tram railroads into the vast pine forests, and after the big, two wheeled carts that straddled the logs and pulled them up to the tram railroads, they were then pulled onto the tram by 4 oxen and hauled to the mill at Richburg. This operation extended down to the Florida line. Several hundred convicts were leased for a very small sum from the State of Alabama to work on this entire operation. Thousands of acres were bought and sold by Mr. Boyd. Some of it became the huge farm I described before. If prisoners of today gripe about living conditions, they should know what it was like.

C. E. "Pete" Dorsey, Henry Dorsey, and Mack Dorsey, brothers, worked at the mill machine shop. This led to them inventing the "Dorsey Stump Puller," which was the fore runner of the nationally known "Dorsey Trailer Company". Mr. Boyd was President of the First National Bank of Elba; Vice President of the First National Bank of Enterprise and was appointed President of the Board of Administration by Governor Brandon. I believe this was over the Prison System. That probably played a large factor in convict labor. All of this huge operation took place between 1900 and 1949. The huge farm was going strong in the 1940's. The saw mill probably played out before then. He was one of, if not the first, millionaires that Coffee County ever had. He died May 8, 1949 and is buried in the En-

terprise City Cemetery. Much of the land he acquired is still in the Boyd family. At that period in the history of Coffee County, there is no doubt that he was the largest operator there was. I've told about the vast yellow pine forests, he cut more of them than all the others combined. I should tell here that the main railroad line went to Dothan. They formed a spur route that branched off at a small community called Waterford. The spur route went through Enterprise, New Brockton, Richburg, where his mill was located, and on to Elba. Elba was the end of the line. It turned around in Elba and made the return trip. He had at least 300 hundred convicts. Dr. B. J. Massey was hired to keep them well enough to work. Lumber was shipped to many different states. Its quality was the best available. The Bonneau home was built by Lucious Young in 1922. It was built of that long leaf yellow pine.

Once a week they would have a flogging. This decision was made by the supervisors to punish the convicts that did not follow orders quickly enough or displeased them. Dr. John Mason Kimmey told me about this. His aunt, Ella Windham, met a carnival worker by the name of Gore. He and Miss Windham fell in love and were married. Dr. Kimmey called him Uncle Gore, so he did not recall his given name, but thinks they are both buried at Damascus. At any rate, Mr. Gore was the designated flogger. Dr. Kimmey wanted to watch, he would take him to the convict camps, but would not allow him to see any of the flogging. We thought slavery went out in 1865, but apparently we were mistaken.

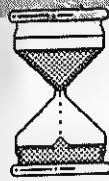
The massive stumps that were left after cutting these huge virgin pine trees were so hard to do anything with. The only power available was horses, mules, and oxen. Dynamite was the best way they had to get them out so that they could cultivate the land. They placed the number of dynamite sticks into holes dug under

the tree stump and used a cap and primer to blow them out of the ground. Many of the men lost an arm or a leg. The really unlucky ones lost their lives.

This is why the Dorsey Stump Puller was so much in demand. The Dorsey's left Richburg and came to Elba to set up their machine shop. The first large order for them came from a very unexpected source. Of all places--Russia.

Mr. F. M. "Tup" Wise started running the big Boyd-Wise Farm that I told about earlier. I never knew Mr. Boyd, but I did know and deeply respected Mr. Wise. He had six sons. They were Howard, Dalias, Dewey, Allen, George, and Jordan. The one daughter was Barbara. She married Cliatt Snow. It was such an unusual name that everyone called him Clyde. She was a lovely person. They had no children.

I sold Tup Wise many a truck load of farm supplies. When he died, I embalmed his body. I directed his funeral, and stayed for the closing of the grave. I held him in the highest esteem.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

I should start by saying "What goes around, comes around." That is more or less what happened to the pine trees. There will never again be the vast long leaf yellow pines that are long gone. It takes about 40 years to grow them. Timber companies now own a large part of all the land. They want trees that can be harvested in 15 to 20 years. They have developed species that will do that.

50 years ago, and probably much less, if you said you were going bird hunting, everyone who knew anything about hunting knew you meant quail. About 30 years ago there were still lots of quail. We had many small farms scattered all over the country side. Quail, in order to raise, must have two things, feed and cover. The small farms helped give them what they required and we were blessed with a large quantity of birds. Hunting was more than just shooting them. There was such pleasure in just watching a good bird dog work. They loved to hunt and it was so apparent. It was beautiful to see them rove about, smelling for birds, and when they found them and went into a point it was a work of art. I recall being about three miles south of Shiloh Black Church, on the old New Brockton road. It was about a mile below the old Horace Fuller place. It takes an old timer to know where that was. The house and all has been gone a long time. I was hunting on a hillside looking down toward a branch head, when the dog pointed. I got the covey up and shot a couple to the left of the branch, and I followed to get up some singles. The dog pointed, and instead of a single, up came another covey. I was surprised, but I believe I got at least one more. This covey flew across the branch head and I went over there to hunt the singles. Again, to my great surprise, up came another covey. They tell me that hardly anyone hunts quail anymore. There are not enough left. What a shame, the young men of today will never know the joy of bird hunting. James Martin was the best shot that I ever knew of. He would routinely get 23 birds out of a box of 25 shells.

Dove shoots were an entirely different matter. Back in the 1940's and 50's, we had big shoots. As many as 20 people and even more would go to a large peanut field, where peanuts had been picked, and I have to admit, sometimes a little extra feed had been illegally scattered around to attract more birds. It was not illegal to shoot at any time of the day. The best time to get them was as the sun was coming up. You had to be facing east so that you could see them in the breaking dawn.

In the dove shooting season of 1940-41, my good friend, Williard "Shorty" Martin, and I were going on a dove shoot. We were to get up and be at the field by dawn, so Shorty was spending the night at my house. It was one of the coldest nights that we had. I was on the volunteer fire department. There was no central heat in those days, no electric blankets. Everyone had plenty of quilts and blankets and were well covered up. I lived very close to town and the fire whistle blew. I jumped up and Shorty, being there, got up also. We threw our clothes on and pushed our feet into shoes without socks on, did not even tie the laces. Elba had only one fire truck and the only pressure was from the gravity of water coming from Reddoch Hill. Dozier Roberts lived with Cleve and Daisy Rushing next to the levee on Pea River Bridge. He got the fire truck and we all went to Dr. Ran Crook's new home, unoccupied, on the Brantley road. Not many houses were there then. The road was paved, but no curbs. The fire plug was sitting in a pool of frozen water. Shorty and I both lost shoes in the mud where the ice broke through and our shoes came off. We both think maybe one or two other people helped put the fire out. Not one neighbor or one spectator showed up. The house did not burn badly. How we did it, I'll never understand.

Another fire experience. In 1941 the whistle blew in the day time. The only fire truck was housed in the back end of the building that is now the Police Department. A wooden ramp about a foot high was where we backed the truck into the building. I ran from the Hardware over

there. Everyone was looking over toward New Town. A huge black smoke was boiling sky ward. The truck would not crank. We pushed it out and thought it would catch. It didn't. Ross Smith Chevrolet Co. was in the building where Skinner's is now. The only story section to the right was the shop department. Hollis Matthews was a mechanic there. He ran to get the wrecker to pull the fire truck off to start it. He hooked a chain to the front bumper and gave it a hard yank. The engine started, but it broke the right bumper bolt. That went to the ground. I jumped up on the fender and held on to the hood ornament and some body pushed the bumper up into my hand and away

we went to the fire. My Mother happened to be down town and nearly had a heart attack when she saw me holding on to the ornament with my left hand and holding the bumper up with my right.

It was a large, old building across from Smith Bros. Store on the corner of Hickman and Plant. It was built about 1900 out of the yellow long leaf pine for a cotton gin. The timbers went up high and were 10" x 12" at least. Over the years, cotton lint had accumulated all in it. Oscar English had bought the building and it had been used for different purposes. That morning, Kinney Adkison cranked his gasoline motor to grind corn. It back fired and it went up like gas had been poured on it. There was no hope of saving it, but we did keep Smith Bros. from going and other buildings around. We had 6 to 10 volunteer firemen. One truck. No other equipment. No one was trained except to use good judgement.

The truck wasn't cranked until it was needed. That is the reason it would not crank that morning. The battery had run down because it had not been used in a while. In a recent Clipper, I saw where they now have 25 members, all of them trained, and all kinds of equipment. It is hard to believe, in my old age, that I was ever that young and agile.

By the way, Shorty and I still went on the dove shoot. Youth, wasn't it great.

ELBA CLIPPER JULY 1, 1993
Dear Editor:

I have been reading, with enormous delight, the superb "Remembering with Jake" column. Thank you for publishing these powerful recollections of Alabama history. Mr. Bonneau's sharing of memories is in the finest tradition of oral history. As an historian, I find intellectual pleasure in every one I read! As an Alabamian, I share in the delight with which Mr. Bonneau seems to write each column. I sincerely hope that your readers appreciate the historical jewel they have in Jake Bonneau.

Sincerely,
B. Ray Holland
Assistant Provost and Dean of
Open University Programs



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

We have discussed the early years of Alabama and Coffee County. We now will tell something of the early year of Elba.

A Mr. McLane established a ferry across Pea River at the end of what is now Claxton Avenue, past G. A. Lindsey's office. This was about 1870. Elizabeth King settled here in February 1836. John B. Simmons and Gapia T. Yelverton bought his holdings and started the first store here. At first, this community was called Lenterville. In December of 1842, an election took place to decide where to place the first courthouse. The state legislature had enacted a law to make this possible. The spot chosen was a place about a mile from Damascus. They erected a log house for the courthouse and another for jail. They named this place Wellbourne. A fire destroyed the courthouse along with its records in March 1851. Many people did not like that location, so an election was held on October 5, 1852 and Elba was selected for the new courthouse. F. M. Carrows, Nicajah Harper and James M. Cauthen were to serve on the building committee. A two story courthouse was built on land donated by B. B. Simmons. That is now the Courthouse Square. Saw dust size. Of course, we are also proud of was kept on the floor because most men chewed tobacco and spit on the SouthTrust Bank. They also are gory. The saw dust could be swept up and changed for another clean lot.

In 1846, many people wanted to change the town's name. It was decided for people to place the names Simmons. The Garrett Hotel was a they wanted into a hat and the name picked out would be the name of the next of Davis and Factory, where the town. John B. Simmons had been present Big Little Store is located. It was a two story wooden building on the southwest corner of Claxton and the Brick Hotel was built. Mr. John M. was drawn out by John Foun- hat is how Elba got its name. his family lived there. John Jr., in his Botn of these gentlemen are buried young days, was bell boy. In that in Elba Evergreen Cemetery. Neither day and age many of the salesmen of them had children. Elba became were known as "drummers", that de- an incorporated town in 1853.

The idea for a public library started with the Elba Study Club in 1936. The club had a book shower in the home of Mrs. Lamar Rainer, Sr.

Each guest contributed one book and a library was set up in the home of Mrs. John F. Brunson. In September of 1936, they were moved to City Hall.

Members of the Study Club and Three-In-One served as librarians. The Works Progress Administration helped finance it from December 1939 until April 1943. The Elba Public Library is to be congratulated for all of the trials and tribulations it has gone through. They established a very good and effective

library in the former Dr. J. M. Kimmy building. This was destroyed in the March 1990 flood. With the work and money of dedicated and caring Elba citizens, the Elba Library is now the most beautiful building in town. Thank God it was placed on the corner, of an otherwise deserted, empty lot, of an eyesore. I am sure that Charlotte Clark, having been very active on the Elba Library Board, had something to do with it, but all of Elba can be thankful that her husband, Fred Clark, Sr. and she gave the property for the new building. It is now one of the city's great strengths. It has tape services never before available and will one day have all the information, and more, than could be expected of a city this size. Of course, we are also proud of our Senior Citizens Center and the SouthTrust Bank. They also are gorgeous buildings.

Elba, at one time, had at least two hotels that I knew about. Blue Hotel was a two story wooden building on the southwest corner of Claxton and the Brick Hotel was a two story brick structure on the corner. It was torn down and the Elba, so he placed that name in the Brick Hotel was built. Mr. John M. Garrett was major owner and he and his family lived there. John Jr., in his Botn of these gentlemen are buried young days, was bell boy. In that in Elba Evergreen Cemetery. Neither day and age many of the salesmen of them had children. Elba became were known as "drummers", that de-

noted a traveling salesman. Lots of them came into town by train. When the 1929 flood came, the upper floor was full of people escaping the water. A couple from Montgomery was there and her baby was born during that raging water period. I have forgotten their names, but I do recall the baby was appropriately called "Noah".

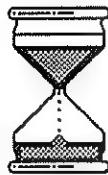
Another, rather amusing, thing occurred. I remember the name of this gentleman, but out of respect for his family, some of whom still live here, I won't call it. Anyhow, he was a well known "gambling man". As the brick wall was crumbling down, he reached into his pocket, pulled out a pair of dice, and threw them into the raging water and shouted, "Forgive me, Lord."

I'll tell this on Mr. John M. Garrett, Sr. He was, from all I have heard about him, a well educated man, rather aloof. Most people in that day and time only drove their cars when they were going out of town. The Garrett home was on Buford Street, where Haywood Drug Co., now stands. The car garage was around the corner on Factory Street. It had a raised wooden floor so the tires would not be in contact with the damp ground. Mr. Garrett was going on a trip, so he went to C. O. Miller Filling Station on the corner of Simmons and Claxton. He told them to fill the car with gasoline, check the oil, and check the tires, because he was going to Montgomery. Standing nearby was a young "hot shot drummer" with his new two door coupe. He looked at Mr. Garrett and said, "Are you going to Montgomery on that car?" Mr. Garrett replied, "I would much prefer to go to Montgomery on my automobile and my pocket book, than your automobile and your pocket book."

John Jr. had the Garrett house moved back to Collier Street after WWII, when he built the Ford Motor Company agency building for his own company. It has now become Haywood Drug Co. The old Garrett home is now Bradley's Florist.

The event at C. O. Miller Filling Station occurred in the 1930s. By the way, I did not say "service station" on purpose. All they did in those days was sell gasoline and oil. They did grease jobs, but did not repair cars.

There was, at one time, a hotel called The Elba Hotel. I do not recall anything about it, nor can I find out about it. It did exist.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

I remember when people would ask me why I became a Licensed Embalmer. Now hardly anyone knows or cares, that I ever was. At the risk of being a wee bit boring I'll tell how. I'll assure you that you will find some interesting stories.

My great-grandfather, William Henry Bonneau, Jr. was a medical doctor. He graduated from the Medical College of South Carolina in Charleston. He married Olivia Moorer, daughter of John Jacob Moorer and Leah Rumph Moorer of Lowndes County, Alabama. While visiting her uncle, Dr. John Rumph in Perote, AL, he died. This was in 1860 and he was only 39 years of age. In that day and time the obituaries were very detailed. This obit was in the Union Springs newspaper. It told of his long illness. He was traveling with his wife and small son. From everything it said, he died of tuberculosis. In that day they called it consumption. It was a long way back to Lowndes County. I don't see how his body could have been sent back. The Rumph's are all buried at Perote Cemetery but I have never found his grave. His widow, Olivia Moorer Bonneau is buried in the Bonneau Family Plot in Evergreen Cemetery. She died in 1910.

William Henry "Harry" Bonneau III was an only child. He was attending the Medical College of Alabama, located in Mobile at that time. He met and married Annie Salome Conolley. They married in Mobile in 1885. Like so many families in the Post Civil War, money ran out, and he had to return home before he got his medical degree. I have no idea how much he lacked getting it, but I do know that for the rest of his life he was known as Dr. W.H. "Harry" Bonneau.

I have always enjoyed the company of people, but in my thirst for knowledge, I visited the elderly. In 1967 I visited Mr. Sam Head in the Elba Hospital. He was a brother to Rhett Head who married Walter Crook. He was from Victoria. My father was born there. He told me about Doctor Bonneau, who died nine years before I was born.

One Sunday afternoon someone came to Dr. Bonneau's house and told him that there had been a bad knife fight a couple of miles down the road and he was needed there. He was so big and fat they had to hook up his horse and buggy so he could go to him. The man was on the ground and his intestines were hanging out on the ground. Dr. Bonneau was not able to get down to him so he had several of the men to get a wash pan and place his intestines in it and they picked the man and pan up and placed it on the edge of the porch. Dr. Bonneau washed him up and used what disinfectant he had. He sutured them up and used iodine on the wound. Mr. Head told me the man lived about 10 years and died of natural causes.

Jesse W. Blocker was a rural mail carrier for more than 50 years and lived to be at least 90 years of age. He told me that he drove the horse and buggy for Dr. Bonneau on several occasions. He said Dr. Bonneau always carried his dental tools along. The country was not populated to any great degree. People would want him to fix or pull teeth. I suppose you did what you could to make a living. Mr. Blocker told me that when Dr. Bonneau pulled himself into the buggy, it would go way down on that side.

I asked Mr. Blocker if he knew why the front yard of the Bonneau property on Claxton was sandy loam and the back toward Cordelia was hard as a brick in dry weather and a dark, gooey mess in wet weather. It was also very rich soil. He told me that, before Elba had any drainage ditches, there was a wet weather

pond back there in a low space. It had been there maybe a thousand years and all of the vegetation that rotted there made it that way.

My father, John Moorer Bonneau, never told me that he would like me to become a doctor but on numerous occasions, he would in a subtle sort of a way, intimate that he would be pleased if I studied medicine. In my day we wanted to do what pleased our parents. I did give it the utmost

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consideration but after thinking it over and knowing it would take 10 years, I decided that since my father originated the first funeral business in Elba, it would please him if I became an embalmer.

Hoehn Michel, my first cousin, was married but my father sent him and his wife to Nashville, Tenn. and paid his expenses for him to become an embalmer. Charles P. Hayes II and his wife were there at the same time. My father gave both jobs at the Hardware and his other businesses including the funeral home. They were both several years older than I was. I went to Gupton-Jones in Nashville and graduated there in the fall of 1939. I could not get my license until I was 21 years old in December of 1941. It did not make that much difference since I had been assisting in the business in every way since I was 15 years old.

Until about 30 years ago the only ambulance service was the funeral home's, not only in Elba, but everywhere. You bought a combination hearse and ambulance. It was kept equipped with a cot and ready to go as an ambulance at all times unless used for a funeral. It was rather easy to convert it either way it was to be used. It was always gassed up and backed into the garage ready for emergency runs. I took a course in extensive first aid to be prepared for accidents.

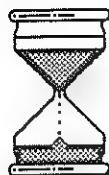
I never told my father what I did about making a decision that I thought would please him. When I was in the embalming room with a body I didn't think much about it. I was taught to do a professional job and I did it well. I was real good at restorative art. That means making a disfigured face look good again. Most of the time it was wreck victims.

In a small town you knew so many of the people that when they were placed in the casket and the family all arrived, that is when I became a person again and suffered with the family.

I should never have gone into the funeral business. In my old age I can say this. What difference does it make at this late date in my life.

Next week I'll tell some of the amusing events. There were some.

I only intended 1 week, it is going to be missed.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

Since I'll very soon talk about driving on the Coffee County dirt roads of long ago, I will tell how I started driving. I was always rather big for my age. Later I was just big. My father taught me to drive when I was 12 years old. We had a big Buick auto. It was a 1930 model. The frames of cars in that day were wooden, covered with metal. Of course the fenders and hood were heavy metal. The bumpers were made of spring steel. Our car was 4 door. You could almost open the back door and walk into it. The door posts on each side that separated the front from the back, had a flower bud vase on each side. It was thought to be rather elegant to place a rose bud in each when you were making a trip. This monster is what I learned to drive. On Sunday afternoon, my parents would let me take the girls out for a drive. I could be gone for 1 hour. We were all careful to be back in that hour. No one wanted to be grounded and we knew better than to test my parents. No drivers license were required until Oct. 1, 1936. You had to be 16 years old before you could get your license. I would not be 16 until Dec. 12, 1936. We were taught to never disobey the law so I was miserable that short time not being able to drive. There was no test to take. Just pay the Probate Judge 25 or 50 cents and you got your little piece of paper to drive legally. It was a great feeling.

Of course I grew up driving on dirt roads. Some of them were real bad. Some had some gravel mixed in the clay. That was considered a good road.

Comer DeVane was Elba's first embalmer. He worked for Bonneau-Jeter all of his life. For some reason, nearly every funeral home evolved from owners of hardware stores. It was that way nearly everywhere. My father saw a need for a funeral parlor in Brantley, AL. He rented a building on Brantley Main Street and hired I.D. Morgan as funeral director. He was an uncle of Mary Louise Morgan Collier. When he had a death and they wanted embalming, one of us from Elba had to go and handle it. This is a period more than 50 years ago and I don't remember

why Comer was not available. It all fell my lot to do it myself. I.D. called me one rainy night and told me he had a gentleman there whose mother had died. I went immediately over. When I arrived and was introduced to the man, he said he lived north of town on an unimproved road and it would be hard to get in and out with the body. I was a young, smart and edgy young guy who grew up on dirt roads. I told him, "If you got out I can surely get in and out". He said, "Yes sir, but I come out on a horse". My ego shrank but after putting on chains and scoops and shovels, we made it. It was not easy. During this same period I had to have someone to help me. I found young Frank Clark. Still in High School. Buddy Clark and Minnie Lee, his wife, and their family lived on the Taylor Mill Road about where Burch Trailor Court is now. Frank was a jewel. He was willing to help in any way and was most capable. One week we had 5 funerals and I would get him up at all times of the night and go to the school to get him to help.

The Victoria road was notorious for being one of the slickest ones around. There was a saying, "You

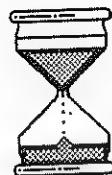
can pour a 10 quart bucket of water down hill in Victoria and you can't get to Elba." It was terrible. The road was red clay and they kept it hog-backed to run the water off. We were in the Victoria Church when it started raining. We knew we were in trouble. I grew up on unpaved roads. Very few were paved. As long as you could keep one side of the vehicle on top and straddle the hog back you were alright. When you met someone and had to give them half of the road, that is when trouble began. We met someone. That big hearse started to slide the back end towards the ditch. I stopped the hearse to keep it from going into the ditch. I told Frank to pull his shoes and socks off, roll his pants legs up and get ahold of the back bumper and pull it back up into the road while I eased it into gear. Frank looked at me and said, "Jake, I never have refused to do what you asked me, but I weigh 140 pounds. This

hearse weighs 6,000 pounds". I told Frank to just go ahead and do it. I eased along and Frank pulled it back into the road and got back in, muddy feet and all. He said, "I'll be dog-goned. It worked".

A baby, new born, died and I sold the casket and the family just wanted a grave side service at Zoar Cemetery with no preacher. Several people gathered there and I thought it was not proper not to have something said before burial. I saw Mr. John Rushing was there and asked him to say a prayer. He said, "I beg to be excused. You go right ahead". Which I did.

A lady here in Elba died. She was only about 35 years old. The funeral was to be held at the Damascus Church. I asked her husband if he wanted me to notify the preacher. He said the preacher he wanted was in a revival meeting at Samson and he would let him know. Frank and I arrived at the church and everyone followed us and the casket into the church. This was the old wooden building with the cemetery across the road. The preacher had not gotten there after a while and people were getting edgy. Frank came up and whispered to me, "Jake what are we going to do if the preacher don't show up?" I have one of those voices that really carries well. I thought I was whispering back to him when I replied in my usual self confident way, "Don't worry. If he don't show up I'll preach it myself." After about 10 minutes the husband of the deceased got up and walked up to me and said, "Mr. Bonneau, it's alright. You go right ahead with it." I always carried a Bible in the hearse. Frank went and got it. I had heard enough funerals. I never heard of anyone being preached into heaven or hell either. You made that yourself before you died.

All of this I have been telling about occurred in late 1940 until probably early 1942. Frank joined the U.S. Navy and when they asked him his full name he said, Frank Clark. They told him they needed to have a middle name in case of too many Frank Clark's. I was quite honored and will always consider it a great compliment that he chose "Jacob". Frank retired from the Navy, got several college degrees and taught for years at Enterprise Junior College. I hope I never forget the early years. You live and learn.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

I know that I am the only person Elba that is alive and can tell the following. I don't know of anyone that has ever told of the way life was in the early years of the funeral business. I started assisting Comer DeVane, and at times Hoehn Michel, when I was 15 years old. That was 1935. Very few people would let their loved ones be removed from the home to be embalmed. We had a folding embalming board that we carried into the home and placed the body on it. It was low so we were forced to sit in straight chairs. We had at least two large suitcase type cases that we unfolded the sides and that contained the large glass, square bottles that were used for the disposable products that were the result of embalming. All tools and things that are today mechanized and electrical were hand operated. It was quite a difficult way to do it but that was the way people had to be introduced into embalm. We were payed times. I started smoking at 16 years old. You almost had to fight. I did not like to fight. Those lamps that were allowed by some of the more modern minded people to bring the bodies to the funeral home were also a source of lighting a cigarette. All you had to do was place the cigarette in your mouth and place the end over the lit lamp. Two puffs and it was lit. Fascinating to me. I'm glad that I quit smoking many years ago. Nobody told me to do so. I remember that they were \$3.50 a carton when I quit. I can't believe they are so much now and going higher. See--I'm not entirely stupid.

Almost all funerals up into the late 1940's did not cost more than \$400, that included embalming, wooden case, I'm sure made by Sam Reeves, that had several boxes of suits and dresses. One size fits all. You can not repossess a casket or vault. Grace Lee Ebert was Coffee County Welfare Director for a long time. Grace would call me and say "Jake, I am in trouble". I knew what that meant. I was in trouble too. She had an indigent person to die and I was to handle the funeral. We kept flat topped caskets in the storage room for this kind of pose. A box came with the flat top and I would get them buried. For this home. It made no difference whether the Coffee County Commission paid \$25.

afraid that their relatives and neighbors would think that they did not love them if they did not bring them home. We are all "creatures of habit". Old habits are hard to break.

was a pioneer in trying to get them to leave the casket at the funeral home. It was a slow process. We had to get people to sit up at the homes of the deceased. Usually we would ask at least three people to go in late in the afternoon and stay until midnight.

carried into the home and placed the body on it. It was low so we were forced to sit in straight chairs. We had at least two large suitcase type cases that we unfolded the sides and that contained the large glass, square bottles that were used for the disposable products that were the result of embalming. All tools and things that are today mechanized and electrical were hand operated. It was quite a difficult way to do it but that was the way people had to be introduced into embalm. We were payed times. I started smoking at 16 years old. You almost had to fight. I did not like to fight. Those lamps that were allowed by some of the more modern minded people to bring the bodies to the funeral home were also a source of lighting a cigarette. All you had to do was place the cigarette in your mouth and place the end over the lit lamp. Two puffs and it was lit. Fascinating to me. I'm glad that I quit smoking many years ago. Nobody told me to do so. I remember that they were \$3.50 a carton when I quit. I can't believe they are so much now and going higher. See--I'm not entirely stupid.

I don't recall the exact year but it was around the middle 1930's some brilliant person in Birmingham came up with the idea of selling burial insurance. It was a great idea. Most people had trouble coming up with enough money to pay for a funeral and the funeral homes were delighted to be assured they would get some pay for their services. At first they sold a policy that called for embalming the body, a cloth covered casket, suit or dress and all services. The funeral home was paid a modest sum for their services. The company, Brown-Service furnished the casket and them as they were used. This caught on so well that they added a burial vault and for a small increase in premium you could have a metal casket.

Nearly every town had two funeral homes. Only one was under contract to Brown-Service. The other funeral homes had many friends and customers. This lead other insurance companies to be formed. Family Reserve began to write burial policies. When they got big enough and the

independent funeral homes were getting too much business, that meant Liberty National, which had bought Brown-Service, had to buy them out to keep down the competition. Then Luguire formed a burial insurance company. It, with the help of the independent funeral homes, also did well. When it got big enough, Liberty National bought them out. In today's world, that could not happen. It was a clear case of forming a monopoly and that is forbidden by federal law. There was no Ralph Nader groups or other consumer protection groups in that day. The insurance company had a batter of lawyers on their payroll at all times to fight any case that would prevent them from getting richer and richer. The funeral homes had fought long and hard for many years but finally had to face the fact that they had lost. Leon A. Boyd, II had Boyd Funeral Home in Enterprise. James Wood had Wood Funeral Home in Troy. Bonneau-Jeter was in Elba. It was the same in Opp, Andalusia and all over the state, competition was eliminated.

We had Emergency Aid and Southern Benefit Insurance Companies in Elba that wrote some burial policies but never enough for the big company to worry about buying them. Burial policies in force enabled the insurance agents to have access to homes where they sold cash policies and made the L-N Company even wealthier. The company then started not honoring the vault and burial policies as they were written. They instructed the funeral homes to give you credit towards the funeral you were now going to buy instead of having a nice funeral that had been paid for in your policy. I am sure

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that many people that are younger than I am, and lots older than me, that have PAID UP vault and burial policies, which have been put away for any number of years, that is not what we were told when they were purchased.

As that old country song about the man who lost his woman said, "She got the gold mine--I got the shaft". Liberty National is now part of Torch Mark. That is a holding company that is the biggest company in the Southeastern United States of America. Hayes Funeral Home is not responsible for any of this. They are a little cog in the big wheel. They just do business with the insurance company. If I were Charlie, I would remove the "Brown-Service" under the Hayes name out front. It certainly is no longer an asset.

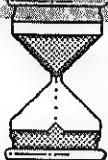
By the way. It is hard to believe. We have now become accustomed to having funeral services at Hayes Chapel. I told of how hard it was to get people to change. Once they do, it sure becomes a habit in a hurry. Hayes had Elba's first chapel and that was when the Hayes Funeral Home was built on the hill in 1969. I trust this has been enlightening.



Dear Editor,

The Elba Evergreen Committee recently received a \$1000 donation for its Trust Fund from Alpheous Lee Ellis and it is deeply appreciated. We most assuredly need more to buy equipment, pay for help and other expenses we occur to maintain it. Too many people take it for granted that their lots are kept at no expense. That means that they are not paying their way. We need all of the help we can get.

Sincerely,
Jake Bonneau



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

Mrs. C.E. Dorsey, known and loved by all, was called by her many close friends affectionately as "Auntie". She exuded charm and graciousness. She conceived the idea of establishing a Perpetual Care Fund for the care and maintenance of the Evergreen Cemetery. Any number of families have several generations buried there.

It is surprising that lots of people think of it as a city cemetery. It is not. The City of Elba accepted that responsibility many years ago because no one else did. It was not kept well at all. I remember very well the day that Franklin Delano Roosevelt died. We were in the Evergreen Cemetery having a cemetery working when the news came that he had died at Warm Springs, Georgia.

The care and maintenance of the cemetery. She died in late January of 1970 before she could put her idea into effect. Mrs. J.V. Wright, Florie, was very close to the Dorsey family. J.V. had always been the center of the Dorsey operation since the early days. She took it upon herself to get Auntie's ideas into operation. Several people met at the new Hayes Funeral Home office to get a committee formed.

Dan Fred Prescott, a native of Elba, did a lot of research and long hours of work getting information that he compiled into a "History of Evergreen Cemetery". Part of this will be from his work, to which everyone interested in the Evergreen Cemetery should be indebted to him.

In 1853 the road from Elba to Troy went by the cemetery. It went on up near Beaver Dam Church and cemetery and turned north up by Antioch and on to Troy. This was done because they had to take the high country and the route with the least creeks and rivers to ford. I have no idea when it changed to its present route.

The first graves that can be identified are: James Ham, born May 8, 1811, died June 21, 1848; George C. Yelverton, son of Gappa T. Yelverton, died July 19, 1849. I am sure here were unmarked graves prior to that and of course, over the years, many were unmarked.

The Evergreen Primitive Baptist Church was there on the southeast corner of the cemetery in 1863. It was moved across the Pea River above the old swimming pool. It was on the left side of the road for a number of years. It was moved there in 1900. Thus came the name of the cemetery. It started around the church and was quite naturally called Evergreen.

People were to choose where they wanted their lots to be and usually took out whatever they thought they needed for their family, at no charge. This was done because John Fountain and his wife, Sarah, had deeded to the City of Elba, 11 acres of land on December 20, 1877 for the use of the cemetery.

I had better back track and tell how the cemetery was enlarged. As time went by, it became a necessity as we were running out of space.

In 1948 L.P. Mullins was Mayor of Elba. Jordan Lindsey was a councilman. L.P. called me and asked me to ride down to Kinston with them to talk to Mr. L.H. Price. Mr. Price had formerly lived just north of the cemetery and owned land there. We talked to Mr. Price and he agreed to sell 1.4 acres next to the cemetery. This was paid for by the city. This is now the portion to the north of the third entrance. By 1962 we needed more space and there was not enough land to extend the boundaries to the degree that was needed. J. Drayton Smith agreed to sell the trustees 8.9 acres directly across the road from the Evergreen Cemetery. That was in 1962. It had to be prepared for a cemetery. It had been farm land for as long as I could remember. Mr. and Mrs. J.B. Mills had a daughter that was killed by a vehicle in Geneva County. She was born June 13, 1953 and died February 2, 1963. Her name was Evonne Mills. That was the first grave on that side of the cemetery. That side is now filling up fast.

The best thing that ever happened to the Evergreen Cemetery Committee was when they got Harris Winston to accept the chairmanship in June of 1970. Under his leadership, drives were held to make up operating funds for the cemetery to be properly run. Several of the ladies obtained, through a lot of hard work and perseverance, names and addresses of people who had loved ones buried in the cemetery and would contribute to our fund. It was a long slow process. Harris got

someone at of Troy to accurately survey and mark off lots on the new site. He even found a water line that meant one driveway had to be changed. He taught Ed Gullion, our caretaker at that time, how to identify the lots.

He worked on getting the IRS to extend us a tax-exempt number so

U at m morials and donations were tax deductible. That came into effect March 31, 1972. He established a Trust Fund with the First Alabama Bank in Montgomery. In spite of all the hard work done by the committee we still have less than \$120,000 in the trust fund. With interest rates so low, if we did not receive memorials, a few donations and the small amount from the sale of lots, we could not maintain, buy the equipment and pay the caretaker to keep it more than 20 acres.

Bell Brunson bought the land formerly owned by the Prices. His daughter Teresa is in the Elba Nursing Home. In 1990 the committee had an opportunity to buy 1.98 acres, 53 ft x 400 ft. from her. Even though we were short of money, this land was adjoining the north and east section of the old side and we must have it for future use. We paid about \$1,000 for it. It is in woods and needs cleaning up and prepared for use. We simply don't have the money.

Ha ris Winston had to resign as chairman of the committee in July of 1861. He did a great job and got it all started. John Waylon Sharpless is now doing a good job in that position.

The most impressive structure in the cemetery is a white marble mausoleum with 6 crypts. It is surrounded by 50 feet of white marble with four crypts outside. This was built by Alpheous Lee Ellis who was born in Elba. His father, A.O. Ellis, his mother, Lillie Lee and his wife, Helen Lansden are all at rest in 3 crypts. Lillie Lee Ellis was the daughter of Charles Stephen Lee, born December 31, 1863, died December 23, 1943. Her mother was Ida Louise Lee, born April 15, 1870 and died August 14, 1948. They are buried not too far from the location of the Evergreen Primitive Baptist Church. The Charlie Lee home is still standing. It is the large white house on the right on the New Brockton Highway, past Hayes Funeral Home on the left.

Mr. Al Ellis was born in Elba on February 5, 1906. He attended A.P.I. (Auburn) and the University of Alabama. He left Elba in 1925 to go make his fortune. He did not inherit wealth as some people do. As one of my favorite actors, John Housman used to say in a financial commercial, "He made his money the old fashioned way. He earned it."

Governor's aunt dead at 96, funeral scheduled for today

Lifetime Elba resident was wife of Ross Clark Circle's namesake

By DANNY LEWIS
Eagle Staff Writer

ELBA — Thelma Folsom Clark, 96, of Rt. 2, Elba, widow of the Ross Clark, for whom Dothan's Ross Clark Circle was named and an aunt of current Alabama Gov. James E. Folsom Jr., died Thursday.

Mrs. Clark, a lifetime resident of Elba, died at Extendicare Health Center in Dothan.

She was the oldest sister of the late Gov. James E. "Big Jim" Folsom of Cullman, the current governor's father.

She also was an aunt of Cornelius Wallace, a former wife of Gov. George C. Wallace.

Mrs. Clark's funeral is scheduled for today at 4:30 p.m. at Hayes Funeral Home Chapel in Elba with Dr. Frank Wells officiating. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery of Elba. The family has asked that memorial contributions in her memory be made to the Evergreen Cemetery Fund of Elba or the First Baptist Church of Elba.

The Ross Clark Circle, which was built in three parts during a three-year period in the 1950s, was named for Mr. Clark at the suggestion of Louis Oppert, then

county campaign coordinator for Gov. James E. Folsom Sr. When the Ross Clark Circle was built, it marked a new concept in road construction for routing traffic around towns nationwide without isolating them.

Completion of the Circle also made Dothan the first city in the United States to be completely encircled by a four-lane highway.

Clark, a close friend and adviser of Gov. James E. Folsom Sr. for 20 years, shot and killed himself March 1, 1955.

His death came early in Folsom's second term and two months after Clark pleaded no contest to a charge of evading \$6,711 in federal income taxes from 1947-49 and 1951.

Mr. Clark was required to pay the taxes plus a \$2,500 fine.

Cont'd

8/12/93

It is easy to say—that Elba and Coffee County never had a person to succeed in any way close to what he has done. He did it with his own intellect and business ability. He has 68 years in Florida banking, 5 years in Alabama when not in school. He is still Senior Chairman of Nations Bank of Florida and goes to his office every day. His titles and board of directors are too numerous to list.

Forbes Magazine listed him in 1992 as one of the richest men in the USA with a worth of \$460,000,000. In case we are not familiar with that many zeroes, that is 460 million dollars.

In show business, particularly Broadway, when someone wants to produce a play and doesn't have the money, they look for a rich "angel" to back it. That is somewhat frivolous, but I will take the liberty of calling him Al. We have written each other lately and have found a mutual friendship. I trust and pray that Al will become the cemetery angel and give us a donation, or memorial to his parents, wife, grandparents, aunts, uncles and a myriad host of kinsmen. He has a trust fund for his mausoleum. If he would give us \$200,000 it would enable us to clean up the property near his mausoleum and maintain the entire cemetery.

Al, get your chauffeur and limousine and drive up to Elba and bring the check. I think it would be appropriate to present it standing in front of the Ellis Mausoleum. You can give it to our chairman or I would be glad to accept it. It might mean instead of using my walking cane I would need my walker. That is alright too. I am sure The Elba Clipper would be glad to be there for the event and picture taking. Al, do your little town you were born in and will be your last resting place, something you can all be proud of and we will always remember you by. There may be someone in Florida that is richer but Mr. Harbert of the Harbert Construction in Birmingham and Winton "Red" Blount in Alabama can't approach what you have done.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

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the ferry. It held about 10 or 12 cars.

I think it is about time for a change of pace. In about 1928 I saw the boat on one end and the back bumpers were hanging off on the other. A man and his two sons ran it. They put blocks in front and back of the car tires so they would be safe. to be someone that had been there. This was quite an experience within itself. You could not see land in the day and time but people were used to that. There were more mules and wagons and horse and buggies than automobiles.

We had two automobiles. One was a Buick and the other, I believe, was a Model A Ford. Dad informed the family several weeks in advance where we were going. Preparations were begun. We were told that we had to carry lots of what we wanted with us. By the way, in those days people did not call their help "maids", you called them cooks. They did the same thing. Sybil Balkum was one of the family. She was with us about 25 years and beloved by all. Sybil and Mother packed boxes of home preserved jellies, vegetables, and fruits. Corn meal, salot, pepper, and what they thought would be needed.

Everything was loaded into the small car. They left room for the driver and Sybil. We had a folding luggage rack that attached to the running board on the passenger side so you could carry suitcases wrapped in oil cloth in case of rain. Cars did not have trunks built into them. The spare tire was mounted in the back of the car.

Daddy drove with Mother up front. Corinne, my sister, and I went in the back with other belongings.

We went to De Funiak and wound through the streets of town to get to the road to Freeport. All of this started before daylight, because my Father had been told exactly what time we had to be there to catch the ferry. When we got to Freeport we turned to the left. We went a few miles and turned right towards Choctawhatchee Bay. We went to a place called Jolly Bay. There was no bridge across the bay for 50 miles or more in either direction. The area where cars waited was filled with oyster shells to keep it from being so sandy you would get stuck. There was a wooden approach pier that the ferry boat pulled up to and tied tight. Cars would drive onto

steps going up and down to the Gulf had showers where you bathed with your suits on before going to your dressing room. This was the only bathing facilities available, but you must remember, in that day and time, very few people in this area had indoor plumbing. It was very adequate. I am sure cooking was not that easy. We carried slab bacon, hams, all of this was smoked and cured. Local fishermen brought fresh fish by to sell and we all learned very quickly to use crab nets and local people taught us to boil and dress, fresh caught crabs. There were people from South Alabama that became friends. I remember when several families from Elba would be there at the same time. I'm sure they had planned it that way.

We went to Seagrove a number of times over the early years.

I trust you would realize that now to get to Seagrove, you go down to Opp and get on U. S. 331. When you get to Choctawhatchee Bay there was for many years a drawbridge there. This was called "Long Bridge." When a boat was coming the span was let up and traffic stopped on both sides until the boat went through. The panhandle of Florida has grown so and traffic so heavy that now they have built a high bridge that boats go under. There was no U. S. 331. There was no U. S. 98 that ran along the coast. There was no way to go to Panama City or to Fort Walton unless you went by ferry back across the bay. There was no bridge across Phillips Inlet going to Panama City and no bridge going from Destin across East Pass. This will be hard for any younger person to believe. There was not bridge to cross the sound at what is now Fort Walton over to the Gulf side. Is it not amazing the changes that have occurred in one short life time. While I am on a roll I may write next about "Camp Walton."

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Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

My Father was John Moorer Bonneau. My Mother was Mamie Till Bonneau. My Father had a number of business interests. He worked hard. He liked to take a week off in early June and another week off in late August. That was just after school was out and right before it started. He enjoyed a change of scenery, so we went to a number of places on vacation. We went to two different places every summer.

In the early 1930's, we went to Camp Walton. That is no misprint. It later was changed to Fort Walton, but during its early years that was the name. We stayed at a hotel called the Miramar. It was located on the sound. In those early years, the only main street ran about 150 feet from Santa Rosa Sound. That was the strip of water that separated from Santa Rosa Island. The Gulf of Mexico was on the other side of the island.

Bathing suits of that era were made of wool. Synthetic material had not been invented. The ladies' suits had skirts that went half way to the knees. Most men's suits were one piece that had upper parts rather like an athletic undershirt.

One nice thing about staying at the hotel was we ate in the dining room. The hotel was a long, two story, wood building with a hall way running the length, with rooms on each side. The back of the building had pilings in the water so it extended the porch out into the water.

Since there was no bridge going across to the island, the hotel had a large open boat that took their patrons across the sound pretty early in the morning. You then had to walk all the way across Santa Rosa Island to get to the Gulf so you could swim in the Gulf. After about one hour, you walked back to the boat for your trip to the hotel. This was done every morning and every afternoon. Early and late enough that you would not get sunburned. One afternoon, coming back, there came a heavy rain shower. I could not believe rain on a bare back could feel like someone sticking pins in your back, but it did.

Camp Walton had about the population of New Brockton. The island in that day had no buildings. Now the whole area from west of Fort Walton and Mary Esther has more population than the entire Montgomery area.

One summer my Father decided he wanted to go somewhere entirely different. I believe this was the same year that he and my Mother had survived the flood of March 14, 1929. They had the ordeal of cleaning everything up. His businesses, our home and several rental properties he owned. I think he wanted to go far away. We went to Jacksonville Beach. It was certainly different. Of course, we had good facilities. I remember being able to drive on the beaches there. You would never do than on the Gulf beaches. That was the first time I ever went to the oldest city in the U. S. A., St. Augustine. It was, and still is, an interesting place. We never went back. The beaches are not pretty. Over the years, we did return to Seagrove several times. The beauty, peace, and serenity appealed to the whole family. Now Seagrove has black topped roads in it and a main beach highway going through it. We would sometimes walk up the beach, getting sunburned in the process, to Grayton Beach. Now the beach road connects them. There are houses in

both areas where some people live year round. Homes and beach houses that cost \$150,000 each are the usual. What a change from our carefree days and quiet serenity of days gone by. Several times we stayed at Garnier's Bayou, near Fort Walton. I believe a doctor from Opp owned that cottage.

Several times, my Dad talked about buying property and building a cottage. Mother always told him that he liked to go to many places and he would not like just one place. He agreed and that was over.

We then started going to the Panama City area. We found a place called Baywood. It was across the Hathaway Bridge on a point of land to the right in St. Andrews Bay. It was a real pretty, tree shaded plot of land with cottages scattered all about. To get there in those days, we

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went down to Samson and on south, across Pea River. There was an old steel truss bridge with a wooden floor on the bridge. When you crossed the bridge it went down at the end, about 8 feet and remained low until you got to the Florida line, about 1 mile away. It then rose back up to the level of the bridge and the approach coming to it. If the river was high it flooded that 1 mile of low section. We went by Ebro. Of course, the dog track had never been thought of. It was just a spot in the road. When you got to a little community called West Bay. The inter-coastal canal is there. There was a wooden approach on each side of the canal with wooden rails. In the center was a floating barge. It had a wooden floor the height of the approaches. There was not a lot of vehicle traffic or barge traffic. When a ship was coming, they let the barge float out of the bridge and traffic had to stop until the tug boat and barges went through and they would then pull the floating, wooden covered barge back into place and traffic could continue. This was in effect until about 1940. They then build a draw bridge in that place and it was there until 1992, when it was replaced with a high bridge that ships can go under without interrupting traffic.

When WWII came about, the U. S. government bought the property that had been Baywood and converted it into a ship building facility. Many of the Victory ships that helped win WWII were built right in that place where so many families had spent their summer vacations in the quiet and serene beauty of that tree lined point of land. Many men, and a few women, from Elba worked in that ship yard and made the most money they had ever made in their lives. Now the old truss type draw bridge, named Hathaway, became a death trap. It was so narrow and youthful, fast drivers were being killed every summer in head-on wrecks. That has been replaced with two multiple lane high rise bridges that cross from the beach section to Panama City itself. I don't know if anyone is interested in this. Just the other side of Panama City is East-Bay. Panama City is on St. Andrews Bay. When you cross the bridge, it becomes West Bay. That is where the name of the community got its name that had the floating barge bridge. It is near the entrance to West Bay. How much things have changed is hard to believe.

Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

The name of Dorsey in Elba and Coffee County for a long time has been a large part of the entire Wiregrass area economy.

From everything I can learn the Dorsey family came originally from Georgia. I know that C. E. "Pete" Dorsey, Henry A. and Mack started working for L. A. Boyd Lumber Co. in Richburg and Mr. Boyd came from Georgia to Richburg, Alabama. There could have been a connection in Georgia. Mr. Boyd, of course, was considerably older but he had a very big lumber operation in the days of virgin long leaf pine trees. The Dorsey brothers, Henry, Pete and Mack, worked at his machine shop. They kept the steam plants that powered the lumber mill. Boyd had several tram railroads that went in every direction out of Richburg, all the way to the Florida line bringing logs to the Mill to be sawed. The Dorsey's were the ones that kept that huge operation running.

One time Henry was on one of the railroad engines when it was derailed. Henry jumped away as it overturned and was not killed. Mr. Joe Stephenson and others jumped the wrong way and were killed. I am sure that this is where the Dorsey's found out how skilled they were with machinery.

The parents of these and the others in this family were: Henry Dorsey who married Epsie Hooks in Georgia. Their children were: 1. Henry Augustus, 2. Mack, 3. Claude Eugene "Pete", 4. Alton, 5. Warren. The girls were: 1. Bessie, 2. Zula, 3. Willie.

Henry Augustus Dorsey married Leila Stephens. Their children were: Lorene who married Sam Sawyer, Henry Augustus, Jr. who married Mary Virginia Lee, Theron Kimmie who married Betty Benton. Mack Dorsey's wife was named Maggie. Claude Eugene "Pete" Dorsey married Gladys Stephens, the sister of Leila who married Henry. I have no idea who Alton and Warren married. Bessie Dorsey married Sam Byrd. Zula married a Mr. Jordan and Willie married a Mr. Rollins. Sam Byrd lived in Georgia which leads me to believe the Dorsey's still had Georgia roots.

Henry and brother Pete started in business as Dorsey Bros. here in Elba. It has been said that Henry invented the first stump puller and others give them credit for jointly inventing it. I have no idea but it was very successful. All of these huge pine trees that had been cut left stumps that had to be removed before the land could be cultivated. Roads were being built and stumps had to be gotten out before you could go through. Cars were made high off the ground so that, like a wagon, they could straddle stumps. The stump puller came into existence in 1920. It was the first practical way to do it. They also built a log skidder.

I have heard that their first machine shop was on the northeast corner of Claxton and Davis across from the Methodist Church. They moved from that location to the corner of North Court and Buford. That is where the first trailer was built in 1926. Naturally, it was a log trailer. Trucks had come into existence and they could pull a trailer to the mill much better than railroads.

Henry A. Dorsey had moved to Enterprise and he had the first automobile franchise there. His brother C.E. "Pete" Dorsey had the first auto franchise in Elba.

Henry was a charter member and first President of the Enterprise Rotary Club. Henry's wife died real young and he married Mamie Edge. From all I've read and heard about her she was another fine christian lady. I will give all of these statistics here:

Henry Augustus Dorsey; Born: Oct. 31, 1885; Died: Oct. 12, 1929.

Leila Stephens Dorsey; Born: March 29, 1890; Died: Feb. 11, 1923.

Mamie Edge Dorsey; Born: Feb. 10, 1889; Died: Nov. 3, 1974

Leila S. Dorsey died of pneumonia at age 32. There were no antibiotics in that day and lot of people died then, that today would live.

Henry Augustus died of cancer at

age 44.

I have no idea of what business arrangements had been made between Henry A. and his brother Pete. Pete had lived in Elba and continued to operate the automobile and manufacturing business in Elba.

The Dorsey Ford Co. was on the corner of Factory and Simmons, where Skinner Furniture is now. James Vardie Wright started working there soon after it started. He started as a bookkeeper and before his death was president of Dorsey Trailers. For a long time the entire Dorsey operation was run out of offices in that building. The two windows on the Simmons Street side of the building was J.V. Wright's office. This building is two story and one of only two in Elba with a hand operated elevator. It was used to store cars upstairs. Only one or two were kept on the show room floor in the front. Bonneau-Jeter had the other one on the west side of the square.

Some have accused me of writing too long of a column. I can't possibly complete this in one. It may take a total of three to tell what I want to tell. If it takes more than that I'll just do it.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

I would like to say that I try to be as accurate as possible concerning dates, but so much I write about occurred so long ago that no one is left to verify.

The Dorsey Company made steady gains in establishing itself as a producer of quality at a fair market price. They expanded from the one building where Walter Cox's Western Auto now is into taking up the building adjacent to them. One I know had been a mule stable. They paved the floors of them all so the heavy machinery would be supported properly.

In 1932, I was in the sixth grade in the old two story school building. That grade was downstairs in the left rear. Of course, the desks were the old cast iron with folding seats. Your desk top had an enclosed shelf under it to keep your book and paper. In the top was a hole to keep the ink bottle and a place to put your pen. Replaceable pen points were used when a tip was bent or wore out. You dipped the pen into the ink well as you wrote. Most was pencil written.

I believe school had been started a short time when a new boy came to class. That boy was Theron Kimmie Dorsey. He had come to Elba to live with his mother's sister and his father's brother, Mr. and Mrs. C. E. "Pete" Dorsey.

Kimmie and I began to develop a friendship very quickly.

I feel sure that Kimmie was named for his grandmother. She was Callie Kimmy, who married Burl Stephens. Callie Kimmy Stephens was a sister to Dr. John M. Kimmy's father. Kimmie Dorsey always spelled his name differently.

Kimmie started coming by the Bonneau house after school and I started going to the Dorsey house. It was natural for me to call his folks the same thing he called them. So they became Auntie and Uncle Pete. We studied together at night and Kimmie's room had an entrance that went into his room from the car port. It extended out a few feet from the room back of it so the steps from the car port went directly into his room. When we became old enough to smoke, we would blow smoke out the window to keep Auntie and Uncle

Pete from knowing it. Their room was a big sitting room and bedroom combined. No one had air conditioning so their windows were up too. Years later, Auntie smiled and told Kimmie how the smoke came out of his room right into the windows in their room. Young people are prone to think they get by with more than they do.

Uncle Pete had a cabinet type radio by his big chair in their room. The controls were on top so he could reach them from his chair. His pocket watch came out when it was about time for the news cast. He knew what time the programs came on. He had a radio in his car and the first portable radio, I'm pretty sure, in Elba. You see, Uncle Pete was a very intelligent man. I would go so far as to call him brilliant. He was a good business man. No one could make a better deal than he and one could never take advantage of him. In that day and time we never heard of dyslexia and no one will ever know why, but the fact remains, he could not read and write. To his credit, it never held him back from being the success he was. This is where Vardie Wright came in. It was he who handled all of the details. Uncle Pete gave him instructions and Vardie took it from there. Uncle Pete was well informed on almost any subject you wanted to discuss. In fact, anyone who knew him considered him to be a good business man.

He never really needed an office. He roamed the entire Dorsey operation. No one every knew when or where he would show up and ask questions.

Most people have hobbies that cost them money. Uncle Pete's hobby was his farm. I'm not sure, but I believe it was about 600 acres just south of Bethany Church. Hugh Gannon ran the farm. He and Uncle Pete did some experimental programs on that farm. That was Uncle Pete's inquisitive mind at work doing that.

Every morning, bright and early, he would go to his farm and be back in time for the shops to open. After the shops closed in the afternoon he made another trip to the farm. In true Dorsey fashion, his hobby made money instead of costing money.

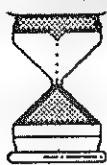
In the 1930's, Auntie bought a 16 cylinder Lincoln automobile. Elba had never seen anything like it. It had the longest hood believable. It had to be to hold the in line 16 cylinders. She would park it across the street from the Baptist Church and play bridge at Ella Jeter's house. Hendrick Jeter was bookkeeper at Bonneau-Jeter.

Many people in that era had servants. Uncle Pete built a two story brick building back of their home. Downstairs was a car garage and storage. Upstairs was for their male black servant, I think I recall his name was Ed Williams. On occasion when I stayed over at the Dorsey home, Ed, with his white jacket on, would serve us breakfast in the breakfast room. He was the cook and did what ever duties that came his way.

Uncle Pete had a terrible case of hay fever. Every spring, the time of the year the pollen was flying, his eyes watered and his nose dripped incessantly. He found that if he went to the Gulf Coast it all cleared up.

I believe it was about 1935 that he bought a lot and built a cottage at Sunnyside, Florida. There was nothing but a sand road going in front of it. In fact, the roads of that day were not very good almost every where. There was no bridge across Phillip's inlet, just west of his cottage. For its day it was a nice place. It had a large screened porch. A few doors east of there was a small country store type. It was run by John Webb. People of that era carried much of what they wanted with them. I went down with them on occasion. By the way, we had to cross that floating barge bridge at West Bay. If a barge was going by, you had to wait until it passed and the floating bridge pulled back into place. By the time we got a few miles from the Gulf, Uncle Pete's hay fever began to clear up. The Gulf breeze did it. After breakfast, we would sit on the front porch. How he did it I don't know, but he would have a Montgomery Advertiser. He would scan through it and look at the upper right corner. In those days that is where they placed the important cotton report, the price of yesterday's, today's, and cotton futures. He would remark about the price of cotton and hand me the paper. That was my cue to let him know news of importance. I would read and say, "Well I see where such and so happened," and discuss what ever was of interest to him. We both were aware of what was going on but that way he kept his dignity.

I trust I am not boring anyone. I've got a lot more to tell.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

I don't know how many people realize what Dorsey Trailers meant to this area in the 1930's. It was a growing company during the Great Depression years. People that were trying to eke out an existence on the farm got jobs at Dorsey. They did not know anything but farming, but were taught to do inside work. They were eager to learn and hard workers. Most grew up hard and saw a way for better living conditions for them and their families.

Mrs. Mayo "Althea" Prescott, kept many news paper articles concerning Dorsey Trailers. Her husband, Mayo, was shop foreman for a long time and was at the time of his death in 1956. A Montgomery Advertiser item stated that from 1934 to 1939 Dorsey improved the sales and quality of their trailers to the point that they were known throughout the United States and sales were being made world wide. During this period, they expanded to Claxton Avenue. They went from the corner of Davis up toward Simmons. Most of this was in old buildings remodeled into their use. The only one that was built new was just back of Daniel's Gulf place. It had a high roof and beams made to carry weight for moving steel around to points it was needed on electric lifts with tracks over head.

Auntie and Uncle Pete had one child, C. E. Jr. He was always called Claudie. When he was growing up, Uncle Pete wanted him to know the business from the ground up. In the summer, when he was not in school, he was in the plant working with the other workers. After he became a grown man, a good many of the workers that had been there from the start still did not consider him as their boss. One day he told Houd Parker what he wanted done. Houd was at his lathe and he smarted back at Claude. Claude picked up a heavy lathe wrench and konked Houd across the head. Dorsey's back doors opened into the alley. Just south of that back door was the back door to Bonneau-Jeter Hardware. I looked up and Claude had Houd on his shoulder coming through the store. He did not say a word. He went out the front door and up the stairs over Bonneau-Jeter Furniture to Dr. Hayes' office. Luckily it was not too

bad, but from that day on Claude had more respect from the other workers. Claude was of a husky build and real strong.

Kimmie and I continued to be good friends. We studied together, double dated and generally acted the way young people of that day did. We never gave our folks any real trouble.

We finished the eleventh grade in 1937. Uncle Pete and Auntie decided Kimmie should go to Baylor in Chattanooga the next year, and of course, he did. I was elected President of my senior class. If Kimmie had been there it might have been different. He was very popular.

I went to Gupton-Jones College of Mortuary Science in the fall of 1938. Uncle Pete and Auntie decided to send Kimmie back to Baylor for another year. We kept in close touch by writing often. People today don't realize that in those days when you made a long distance call, you had to go through every operator in every town and they connected you to the next. It was a long ordeal.

When we were coming home for Thanksgiving and Christmas, we would meet in Birmingham. I would take the Hummingbird out of Nashville. It was a real class act of a train. Real nice and pretty. Luxury would be the right word. It was great to be on it at meal time. The dining car was ultra. White jacketed waiters. Linen tableclothes and napkins. Nice china, crystal and silverware. The food was superb. It was excellent all

the way.

Kimmie and I, at least twice, went to Greenville instead of Montgomery. My Mother's sister lived in the old Till home in Greenville, so Mother and Dad could visit with Mrs. Corinne Till Cureton West and meet Kimmie and I at the depot for the trip to Elba. *SUMMER*

When I graduated from Nashville in early 1939, I don't remember how I got from Montgomery to Elba. I feel that my Father had arranged for someone to meet me. They had informed me in advance of their plans. Mother always loved to travel, go places, and see new things. She did that all of her life. They, that meant

my Mother and Father, my sister, Corinne, and my Aunt Corinne Till Cureton West, had planned a trip to the World's Fair in New York. They bought a Streamer Trunk, leather suitcases, and a regular trunk. The trunks were shipped to Savannah, Georgia and they went by train. They then boarded an ocean liner in port there and sailed to New York City. They were on a guided tour. In those days, I'm sure there were very few of them. They went to the World's Fair, saw the Statue of Liberty and all of the interesting sights of New York City. They went on to Toronto, Canada by Pullman train car. The King and Queen of England were visiting Toronto and they got to see them. They returned to Alabama by train in a Pullman car. In case someone does not know, the word Pullman car denoted it was sleeping cars with a dining car available.

They had told me where the car keys were. I feel sure the house was not even locked. It seldom was. I believe I spent one night at home. Possibly two. Kimmie was home. Auntie often would stay down at the cottage and Uncle Pete would come on weekends.

By the way, their male servant got into trouble and they had a black lady named Cassie that was great.

Kimmie and I took my folks' car and headed for Sunnyside. It was so isolated in those days we could walk across the sandy road to the beach and walk a short way down and it was safe to go skinny dipping with no fear of being seen.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

By 1939 the worst of the Great Depression was over. Of course, in the hardest of times some people still have money, but are afraid to spend it because they are not sure how long it will have to last. Dorsey Trailers had made money and provided work even during the real hard times. They became better known and products were more diversified and sales improved. That meant more work for more people in this whole area.

For some reason Vardie Wright and his wife, Florrie, and I became good friends in spite of the age difference. I remember Florrie fixing me things and Vardie coming into our funeral home to give them to me. I also visited in their home on Smith Avenue on numerous occasions. This is as good a time as any to tell this. I have always admired and been attracted to people of superior intellect. Vardie Wright had an excellent mind and was without a doubt one of the best businessmen I have ever known.

The other person of superior intellect that I was fortunate to have as a friend was well known attorney Charles L. Rowe. Charles would be equally at ease with a meeting of college presidents or sitting on the bench at Morris McCollough's talking to the poorest of the poor and uneducated. It was a drama to see him work in a courtroom. Charles was a heavy smoker. He was born October 7, 1899 and died October 26, 1959, of lung cancer. He started the National Guard in Elba and the building is named for him. When he died I said it was a shame they could not do a brain transplant, so someone could receive that knowledge that I so admired.

Vardie Wright must be given credit for the great contribution he made to the Dorsey success story.

By 1940 most people were not aware of how the war that had been going on in Europe for several years was drawing the United States closer and closer to being a part of it. Our U. S. Government and President F. D. Roosevelt knew. They began to prepare for what they knew was coming.

I want to interject a thought that has just occurred to me. This was a simple time in all of our lives. I remember on some occasions when Kimmie and I had nothing to do and we walked around the courthouse square and just talked. That is all the entertainment we needed. Wasn't it great.

Back to reality. The war effort was about to begin. Dorsey started to receive orders for some four wheel trailers. They expanded all over downtown Elba. The operations were run out of the same two story building on the corner of Factory and Simmons. Uncle Pete started the Dorsey Ford Company there. He later switched to Chevrolet. Sam Rowe ran the automobile part and stayed on at Dorsey Trailers until he retired. I never knew of him working for any one but Dorsey. Vardie Wright saw that it all went well.

On November 25, 1940 the 117th F. A. Btry. D. of National Guard, Elba was mobilized. France Farris was captain. Henry A. Dorsey, Charles Rudolph Bonneau, Dozier Bryan and Jep Taylor were Lieutenants.

Henry A. and Claude E. Dorsey had attended Baylor Military School beginning in 1932, Kimmie in 1937. Henry and Kimmie joined the National Guard. I was so near sighted I

could never enlist in any service. Thank God for eye glasses. Without them I am legally blind. I am pretty sure that Kimmie was a Corporal when they mobilized. He wound up as 1st Sergeant of his company.

Before Christmas of 1940 they were sent to Camp Blanding for training. Ocie Daugherty told me that my brother, Lt. C. R. Bonneau gave every member of the Company "D" a pocket knife for a Christmas present. I am sure that my Father did that. He had John Pringle knives in his hardware store and they were the best. Ocie was there from the very first and went the whole way with that group. He is one of the 5 or 6 Kimmie said, "Take me to the house still living. He and his wife, Clyde, ran a cafe across from Dorsey Trailers on Hickman. They served thousands of nourishing, inexpensive

meals to Dorsey employees for a long, long time. They finally had to give it up. He has never used that knife and still has it. Clyde is in the Elba Nursing Home. Ocie visits her nearly every day. Ocie is fortunate. He remembers in good detail all of his WWII experiences.

The Elba Company went from Blanding to several places before going overseas. They were in two places in Texas. They went to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. While they were there, Claude Dorsey asked me if I would like to go with him, his wife, Katherine, and small son, "Little Pete", as we called him. Of course, I went. Pete was small enough to have trouble pronouncing some words so Katherine and I spent time working on that. Claude was a good driver and took it seriously. We saw Henry, Kimmie, and my brother, Rudolph. It was a very pleasant trip. Claude, Katherine and I were always friends, as well as the rest of the family.

Finally, the Elba Company "D" was sent to New Jersey to be sailed overseas. They arrived there on August 12, 1943. They sailed out of there August 25, 1943 to North Africa. After fighting there, they went on over to Italy. My Father had died of a heart attack on March 11, 1942. Kimmie wrote a nice letter of condolence.

As usual, I left something out that should have been told sooner. While the Elba National Guard was at Blanding, some of the members would get weekend leave nearly every week. Early in December of 1941, Kimmie and some others came home on leave. On that Sunday, we went to church as usual and Kimmie went to his home and I went home to eat Sunday dinner with my folks. After dinner, I took the family car and went by Uncle Pete and Auntie's and picked Kimmie up for a drive and talk. We were downtown with the car radio on when they broke in on the program and said, "Pearl Harbor has been attacked by the Japanese." Kimmie said, "Take me to the house now, I've got to report right back." Everyone remembers where they were when we got into WWII. That is where Kimmie and I were, on the square in Elba.

Enterprise Ledger

Sunday, July 15, 1990

Historic Old fashioned railroad light given to museum

By Roxanne Connor
Accents Editor

The Pea River Historical Society houses its museum in the old railroad depot in Enterprise, but it didn't contain anything pertaining to the railroad—until now.

Last week, John Jacob Bonneau of Elba donated an old-fashioned, battery powered railroad light to the society to be displayed in the museum.

"The light was owned by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, which at one time was the forerunner to U.S. Steel," Bonneau said. "I had a friend in Birmingham who had worked for the company and who knew I was interested in history."

"He took me down to his basement and told me if I'd clean up one of the kerosene lanterns used to signal trains, I could have it," he said. "I saw the railroad light, and I asked if I could have it, too."

Until the flood, the light, which features red, yellow, blue and green globes on four different sides, hung in Bonneau's home.

"After the flood, I thought I'd better go ahead and give the light to the Historical Society," he said, "besides, the museum is in the railroad depot and there isn't anything there pertaining to the railroad."

Bonneau said this particular type light was used for about 100 years, up until World War II. "The light was placed on the left side of the tracks, and the railroad engineer would hang his head out the window (in order to see the signal from the light).

The engineer

was able to see the light from up to two miles away," he said.

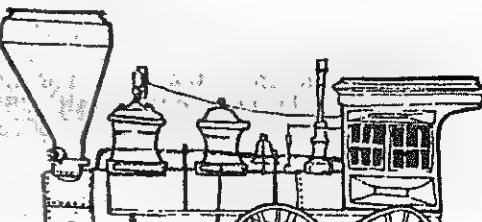
Bonneau said he knew what the red, yellow and green sides of the light meant since they have the same meaning as a traffic light, but he was curious about the blue side of the lantern.

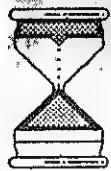
"I asked some old railroad people, and I found out the blue meant that everything was fine and that the engineer could take the train to the limit," he said.

Bonneau said someone would be in charge of turning the lantern to the position it needed to be in order to signal the engineer. "And the bulb in the light was only as big as those used in the taillight of a car."

He added the railroad lights became obsolete after about 1945 when radios came into use. "These were used before there were any radios for the engineers to communicate with the station," he said. "Now, everything is voice controlled and computerized."

Roy Shoffner, who accepted the light on behalf of the Historical Society, said although he is unsure of exactly how the light will be displayed at the museum, it will be available inside the museum for the public to see.



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SEPTEMBER 30, 1993

Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

Dorsey Trailers was in the right business at the right time. The U. S. War Department needed trailers and lots of them. C. E. "Pete" Dorsey was a mechanical genius and James Vardie Wright was a business wizard, a combination that was hard to beat. By the way, some spelled his name Vardye and some spelled it Vardie. I prefer Vardie, it suited him better, I think.

As the war progressed they were primarily manufacturing for the U. S. Government. Some truckers that were hauling essential goods for the war effort were given permits to buy trailers for their own business. Let's face it, if you were engaged in the right business at the right time, the money would keep rolling in. We were fighting a war for survival, not only in the Pacific, but also in Europe.

Dorsey was scattered in several places in downtown Elba. They convinced the Federal Government that it would be in the best interest of the country to give them permission to build a new plant so it could all operate much more efficiently. In the heart of the war, Dorsey bought land, tore down some houses and built the existing large section of the building on Hickman. I feel sure they did not have to borrow any money to finance this large and costly move. Of course, that freed up downtown property to be sold. That is when I bought the newest building on Claxton for building material and supply department for Bonneau-Jeter.

Dorsey began moving into their new facilities in 1944 and completed it in early 1945. It was the first time the manufacturing of the Dorsey products had been in one location so that it could be supervised properly. They had been so successful that they were awarded the coveted Army-Navy E. That was what every manufacturing company desired. The E stood for Excellence. It was announced in advance so that preparations for the big day could begin.

Maxine Prescott had saved a Montgomery Advertiser from February 2, 1945. I have just recently obtained it from her and wish I had been given access to it earlier.

It as usual, does not give Uncle Pete any title nor his son, Claude. It does list him as "Partner". I assume by that he had taken his son, Claude, as partner. Being sole owner, he did not need a title. His ego did not require it either. He was very self confident in spite of his inability to read and write. I have wondered if that made him so competitive that he always got the best part of any deal made to us ^{us}. V. Wright the title of Sales Manager. They needed someone to see that material was shipped from their suppliers on time and nothing delayed because that would hold up the whole production. They hired Price Ringo and gave him the title of Expediter. Price married Luna Delle Bryan who was a sister of Bob Folsom's wife Lara. Luna Delle was a long time employee of Dorsey. There was a picture and a list of office workers. They are as follows: Mrs. Lois Perry, chief of stock control; Miss Irene Teel, payroll work; John D. Lowry, chief accountant; Mrs. Mary Newton, stenographic; Miss Lillian Rowe, stock control; Miss Jean Parker, telephone operator; Miss Totsye Bryan, stock control; Mrs. Elizabeth Jones, accounting dept.; Miss Wayne Bowdin, stenographic; Miss Helen E. Snow, payroll clerk.

This was one of Elba's real big days. Prof. James C. Dixon was M. C. Acceptance of E. Banner was by C. E. Dorsey. Acceptance of E emblems for employees was by J. V. Wright, a Dorsey employee who started with the company in 1912. The longest of anyone else.

Flat-bed trailers, I believe, were used for dignitaries. Among those were Mayor L. P. Mullins; Councilmen Dr. C. P. Hayes, J. J. Lindsey, S. E. Sawyer, F. D. Veal and B. A. Young. Mayor Mullins said, "The awarding of the Army and Navy E' to Dorsey Trailers is one of the greatest things that ever came to Elba."

L. P. Mullins served as Mayor of Elba for more years than anyone ever had before his time and no one has approached it since. Not all at one time. When he did not run again, we wanted him back. He had a son, Billy, that was near my age but I always liked L. P. and he showed his friendship for me. We got along great.

Dorsey exported before WWII and during it to our Allies. They made the best stump pullers and log skidders the world had ever seen. The Phillipines found that the skidders would pull mahogany logs 6 feet in diameter and more out of the swamps.

This was the biggest day Elba had ever seen. The Montgomery paper does not mention it, I am almos' sure that reporter had gathered material for this story in advance of the big day. Dorsey bought lots of their material and products, that went into production, from Montgomery businesses. What I am trying to say is I believe that I remember a huge barbecue was held on that day. Of course the E awards were presented by high ranking members of the War Department to Uncle Pete and the employees that made it possibl.

It is rather ironical, that such a short time after Uncle Pete was basking in his glory of a job well done, that he had a heart attack and died. He was born on January 24, 1881 and died March 22, 1945.

In those days every way was devised possible to save weight for overseas air mail to service men. The Postal Department came up with a tissue thin, light weight, on a letter that you folded and used the same piece for an envelope.

The Red Cross was to notify servicemen of the deaths of loved ones at home. I immediately wrote Kimmie, expressing my sympathy upon the death of Uncle Pete. Little did I know the Red Cross had not gotten word to Kimmie or Henry. Henry had been transferred to another outfit and was no longer with the Elba Company he left with. Kimmie told me later that he went to Henry and told him of the death.

I am not privy to the details of Uncle Pete's last will and testament. I assumed that Claude had already been made a partner and owned a one-half interest. He was an only child. I do know that upon Uncle Pete's death, he finally acknowledged the very great contribution that James Vardie Wright had made to creating this empire. I have been left to understand that J. V. got one-tenth of Dorsey Trailers. By that time it was a considerable amount. This is when Claude became President and James Vardie Wright became Vice-President. Of course, Claude was very young, only 30 years old, but he was capable and still had J. V. at his right hand.

I told you I had a lot to say and I am not through yet. Hope I am recording things for history without being boring.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

W. last told of Claude Eugene Dorsey II taking over Dorsey Trailers upon the death of his father. Now I want to talk about his mother, Gladys Stephens Dorsey, who I had called Auntie before I was even a teenager. was without a doubt one of the finest ladies I have ever had the privilege to be intimately known. I never in my close association with Kimmie and her family heard her raise her voice. She seemed to be in complete control of any situation and here sage advice was welcomed by all. She liked to drive a real nice automobile, and always did. She really enjoyed wearing those gorgeous diamond rings. She dressed well, but never flamboyant. She had good taste in everything she did. Another thing that very few people that were not close to the family knew was that she liked a little pinch of snuff. Ever that was done in such a lady like way that few were aware of it. To me, just proved that she was human too. She was a leader in the Baptist church in many ways. She was active in the Women's Missionary Union, her Sunday School, and all church functions. Auntie did not care in the least who knew that she loved to eat boiled chitterlings and corn crackling bread. I liked them O.K., fried, but she preferred them just boiled with good old southern pepper sauce. She liked bar-b-que and another old southern dish, fried sucker fish. A person had to know how to gut them with a real sharp knife and fry them just right so that the very small bones were good and edible. All in all, Auntie was a very fine, loving, intelligent person and I was blessed to have her as my friend. No one that I knew every spoke of her being involved with the business affairs of the company, but after Uncle Pete's death, I would on occasions see her car parked at the office. I am sure she was capable of being an excellent business woman.

World War II was over in early May of 1945. Henry Dorsey was in business with his brother-in-law Sam E. Sawyer. He started back in Sawyer Candy Co. to resume his life.

Kimmie Dorsey started back to work at Dorsey Trailers. He had dated Betty Benton of Opp for some time before the war.

I had a sister, Hazel, that married Walter L. Jackson. Walter and his father, John M. Jackson, founded J. M. Jackson Motor Co. of Opp, so I was a frequent visitor to Opp. I dated girls and went to parties there quite often. I remember how naive I was. One night, when Betty was at a party with a young man named Taylor from Andalusia, I gave her a hard time about going out with someone other than my pal Kimmie. I suppose I expected her to stay at home and grieve. That is the unrealistic view of youth.

The romance of Kimmie and Betty culminated in the wedding on the night of January 5, 1946 at the Methodist Church in Opp. Joe Benton gave his daughter away. Her mother, Mary Annie and sisters were there. Auntie and Lorene Katherine Dorsey and Mary Virginia Dorsey were there for Kimmie. Henry A. Dorsey Jr. was Kimmie's best man. Claude Dorsey, his double first cousin, and Sam E. Sawyer, brother-in-law, and Jake Bonneau were ushers. Of course, they moved to Elba and Betty had become a Dorsey so she became a member of the Elba-Baptist Church.

The next events I tell about occurred in the spring and summer of 1946. They may not be in the exact sequence but they happened.

As long as Uncle Pete lived, the labor unions did not attempt to unionize Dorsey. Young Claude was now president and they thought the time was right. They made a strong effort. Dorsey was still going strong into the production of civilian products. I recall that paid union organizers came to Elba to place Dorsey Trailers workers names onto the union lists. Elba, at that time, did not seem ready to accept the union. Neither the workers or the people in general. There was a lot of turmoil. I recall one occasion when an 18 wheeler truck drove up loaded with steel to be unloaded in the plant.

Some union organizers stood in the open gate and would not move to let the driver through. Kimmie came up and told the men at the gate that he was going to get in the 18 wheeler and back it up several hundred feet and then get to going through the gate. He told them that once he got it going, they knew there was no way he could stop it quickly. He got in and revved it up and took the steel into the plant.

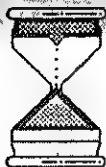
About three of the paid organizers were roughed up downtown. I believe it happened near Fulton Clark's Station. I have no idea who or why it occurred and did not want to know. The Montgomery Advertiser called our Mayor L. P. Mullins and asked him about the reports they had heard. He told them that he had heard of someone getting hurt, but Elba had real high curbs around the square and somebody probably tripped and fell off them.

Fred Harper Sr., had worked with the State for years but was in Elba a couple of years. He and the Mayor were friends and he had been appointed Chief of Police. I really don't recall exactly why I got involved in all of this mess other than being a businessman and a friend of the Dorseys. At any rate, the union brought a federal law suit against Claude E. Dorsey Jr., Kimmie Dorsey, Mayor L. P. Mullins, Fred Harper Sr., and Jake Bonneau. Claude informed us all that he would have the legal details handled and for us not to worry. The best I remember is we all appeared in Dothan and before a federal judge and the case was dismissed. I know that I, and the others, did not have to testify in open court.

It all was a time when tensions were running high and hard feelings were being felt. Claude was a much more decisive leader, in the Dorsey Company that he grew up in, than many could imagine.

He closed the entire plant for about two months in the summer of 1946. It was an effective cooling off period for all.

The best of my knowledge and recollection, the union came to Dorsey in 1959 or 1960.



Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

I want to start this with talking about people that I knew and associated with.

J. Vardie Wright and his wife, Florrie, were friends of mine by the time I was 21 or 22 years old. Vardie was about 22 years older than I and Florrie was about 14 years older. Age made absolutely no difference, we were friends. J. V. and Florrie lived across the crooked White Water Creek bridge in a big old comfortable house. J. V., I am sure, had owned a boat of some type for years. They lived at the confluence of the Pea River and White Water Creek.

In the early to mid 1940's Vardie got me interested in boating on the river. He bought a beautiful Wolverine boat with a Johnson outboard motor. This was during WWII but he knew how to get things done. He urged me to get one too. It did not take much urging. I got a 14 foot solid mahogany deck down to the gunnel (or gunwale) and the hull was white cedar. I had a big Evinrude with electric starter. They were most beautiful boats. Nothing of today's synthetic materials could compare with the sheen and warmth of the gorgeous mahogany and the white hull. Vardie had Dorsey to build a crane and placed it on the point where the creek and river converge. We played up and down the river and had to learn where every sunken obstacle was. They were too big for this river so we started going to Fort Walton where we had the sound and the huge Choctawhatchee Bay.

Sam Sawyer got him a boat, so did Charles Hayes and A. C. Dunaway. We all had trailers for our boats and some week-ends several of us would head for Buck's Store on the Santa Rosa Sound where we could put our boats into the water for launching. We did not fish. They were for the joy of the wind in your face, hitting the waves and a care free feeling that is difficult to describe. When the weather was calm we went through East Pass into the Gulf of Mexico. Several of us did this for a number of years. Vardie later bought a Montgomery City Street Car and had it remodeled or rather I should say, converted, into a real nice mobile home. He leased property and placed it on Santa Rosa Island. It probably was about where

we used to walk across the sound from the boat from Miramar Hotel to swim in the Gulf. Some mornings we would get up, we were always up early, and go from Fort Walton to Niceville where a restaurant had steps from the water up into the building. We would have breakfast looking out on the water. I always carried some one down with me, as did Vardie and the others. It was more fun to have someone with you.

One summer, it could have been as early as 1944, Vardie and I rented two cabins over at the quaint fishing village of Destin. He took his wife, Florrie, and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Estelle Hutchison. I took my Mother and my small niece, Margaret Bonneau English. Of course, Vardie and I had our boats.

My Mother enjoyed life and though she never learned to swim, she loved riding in my boat. Of course, I had life jackets to fit her and Margaret. I rode them all over the bay and we all had a most enjoyable vacation. It is almost unbelievable to see that area where we stayed is now covered with black top, concrete, and multi-million dollar condos.

The reason my small niece, Margaret, was with Mother and I will be explained. It is somewhat of a freedom to reach the Proverbial age of 3 score and 10. You feel free to discuss things that here-to-fore were left unsaid. You see my sister, Corinne, was a beautiful young lady "Miss Elba" and talented. The young men were dating her, most of the time my Mother required me to double date with her. This older man came along and convinced Mother that his 9 years of more maturity would make him better prepared to take good care and provide for her. Mother was woo'd as much as she. They were married August 7, 1939. Corinne was only 17 years old. Margaret Bonneau English was born at Edge Hospital in Troy. The doctor was Dr. Oscar N. Edge. She was born April 9, 1941. Not too long after her birth, Corinne showed some signs of mental illness. Doctors attributed it to the recent child birth. On March 11, 1942 my Father, John Moorer Bonneau, died suddenly at age 55. I was only 22 years old and left to run a large business enterprise and did it well until I decided I was

losing the joy of my youth, and started playing too much to make up for lost time.

WWII was raging on and more and more people were being called into service.

By the way, my Mother said that Corinne's daughter should be named Margaret for her grandmother English, that she had 15 children and not one named for her. She a least should have a granddaughter.

Mother and I reared Margaret. I helped teach her to walk, taught her to swim, to drive a car, and the things that a father should do for a child. No one could be closer.

Corinne was taken to Birmingham to the most eminent psychiatrist we could find, Dr. Beckton ran Hillcrest Sanitorium. She would stay there for 6 months at a time and come home for a little while and then I would take her back. This went on so long that Dr. Beckton called Mother and told her to come with me to get Corinne. He told Mother that he did not think it was fair to keep taking her money when it really was real expensive custodial care.

Mother did not give up. She read where some neuro-surgeon had done a Pre-Frontal Lobotomy with success. I called a good friend in Birmingham and since he was a big insurance man I knew he would know the best one available. I went to Birmingham and talked to Dr. Walter Haynes and he agreed to perform the surgery but wanted to explain the risks. There was a 50-50 chance of surviving the surgery. Mother asked me to make the final decision. I said that there is a chance and we will take it. Corinne had always had an abiding faith in God. My sister, Hazel, from Opp, went to Birmingham when I took Corinne up for the operation. I told her we were doing all we could to help her. She realized she was very ill and wanted help. For three days Dr. Haynes would not say whether she was going to make it or not. Of course we had 3 R. N. nursing shifts with Corinne. It was a rather long recovery, but with her faith in God and all the help of the family and my Mother's doing everything she and money could do. Corinne became a loving, caring church goer, singing in the choir and helped to care for her mother the last few years of her life.

I went off into a tangent when I was telling about our boating escapades and wrote about Margaret.

I really never know what I will say until I write it down.

Next week, I promise, I will continue to tell the Dorsey chronicles.

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Remembering With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

When you are an adolescent a few years of difference in age is quite a lot, but once you attain maturity in age, and mind, a few years means little. The common interests of both parties is what counts.

I was born December 12, 1919. Kimmie Dorsey was born December 30, 1919. I was 18 days older than Kimmie. Claude Dorsey was born August 30, 1914. When Kimmie and I were young that was lots of difference. As time went by it all evened out.

Claude had been trained from the first to be able to take over from his father, and I must say that he surprised a lot of people by doing it in a forceful, competent manner. He and Katherine and I had been friends for some time when he became president of Dorsey Trailers.

I recall one time in the early 1950's that Claude, Sam Sawyer, Dick Dorman, Sam Rowe and I were down in Florida fishing. There were several places we fished at different times. Smoke House Lake, Black Creek, Pine Log and others. I believe on this trip we were at Black Creek. There were only two boats available when we got to the place. One was a good sized one and the other rather small. Claude said that he, Sam Sawyer and Dick Dorman would take the large one and Sam Rowe and I would have the smaller one. Well, that boat was so small that our hip pockets felt like they were dipping water all day. If we had caught a large fish we would have gone under. At any rate, that afternoon we went back to the car and Claude asked, and we concurred, we were not far from Burleson's Fish Camp on Choctawhatchee Bay. He always had a few croker sacks of fresh oysters in the water and ready to be taken to waist high wooden tables with plenty of oyster knives available. The sauces and crackers were placed out by Mr. Burleson. Everyone was to shuck their own. Claude told us to go ahead and he would help shuck for all of us until we had enough and then we were all to shuck for him. He did not want to get started that slow. He did and then we all shucked for him. I feel sure he ate 10 or 12 dozen. Very few crackers. He loved to eat and eat well.

Claude, Katherine, and lots of people around our ages, liked to party. In those days the J and L Club in Andalusia and the Land E Club in Enterprise were very popular. They had dance floors and good food. The atmosphere of then was conducive to a care-free good time. We had never heard of the danger of beef. They both had the best steaks this side of the Green Lantern in Montgomery. I recall that Claude always like heart of celery to crunch on before dinner.

I dated two young ladies from Opp that I came very close to marrying. One of the, a cousin of Betty Benton Dorsey, was a jewel of a person. She was a professional pianist. She was teaching music at Ward-Belmont in Nashville and one weekend Kimmie and Betty and I went to Nashville for the long week-end. Many things in Nashville were named in honor of Andrew Jackson. At that time he was the city's most famous name. Now country music has taken over. By the way, when I went there in 1938, some of my friends and I went to the first Grand Ole Opry. It was downtown, had wooden church type benches and sawdust on the floor, so it was O.K. to spit tobacco and snuff juice on it.

I think we drove up. I sometimes flew up to see my girl. I would fly out of Montgomery on a DC-3, the military called it a C-47, a small two-motored plane with not too many passengers. We would fly to Birmingham and then to Huntsville. I was afraid of landing and taking off from there. We barely could clear a pasture fence in landing and taking off. Huntsville's claim to fame in those days was the "Water Cress Capital of the World."

Claude asked me on more than one occasion to go with him and Katherine to Montgomery to the Blue-Gray Football game. That was a real treat. Dorsey Trailers bought lots of material from Standard Forge and Axle, such as brake drums, brake parts and the axle assemblies. Another big supplies was Nunn's Battery. We had elaborate brunch at the Nunn's.

Dorsey Trailers had to buy and build more property and buildings as the company grew. That meant more work for not only Elba but the entire area. Almost all of the top manage-

ment lived in Elba. Dorsey payroll was the life blood of Elba.

On April 4, 1950, Kimmie and Betty had their first child. Theron Kimmie Dorsey, Jr. was born at Opp's Mizell Memorial Hospital. I was there a few hours afterwards.

These dates are very near correct, not exact. In January of 1951, Kimmie and Henry's outfit was mobilized for the Korean "Police Action". They were not sent overseas and were released in September of 1952. Of course, Kimmie went back to Dorseys. Henry sold his partnership in Sawyer Candy Co. to his brother-in-law, Sam and he went to work for Dorsey in the Engineer Department.

The Dorsey Company continued to expand and do well in the 1950's. They hired the people that were needed to produce a superior product at a good market price. That was what made it go. It was surprising how adaptable the local work force was in industrialized labor.

Claude began to have health problems and he went to Birmingham for treatment. This was in 1957 and the University of Alabama Hospital was just getting to become well known as an excellent treatment center and was nothing to compare to the size it is today. There was a building about 6 stories high across from the hospital where outpatient people could stay and be real close. I think that it was called the Town House.

On Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1957, I drove my Mother, my sister, Corinne, and her daughter, Margaret Bonneau English, over to Greenville for dinner at my aunt Corinne Till Cureton West's home. It was the old Till home. We came back to Elba in the later afternoon. It seems that we had just gotten in when some one called me and told me that Claude Dorsey had died in Birmingham. I believe that I called Florrie Wright for details. Of course, I later learned more. Claude and Katherine were at the Town House. He called room service that morning and ordered for himself: orange juice, a stack of pancakes, a double order of ham, and a pot of coffee. Right after eating, he collapsed. Katherine ran screaming out into the hallway. Several doctors were staying on the same floor as they were, and went immediately to Claude. There was nothing that they could do. A prominent young Elba native and leader of industry, had been lost at age 43. He left his wife, Katherine Hutchison Dorsey, a son, C. E. Dorsey III, called Pete, and his mother, the beloved Mrs. Gladys Dorsey. Katherine never remarried. She was born March 25, 1915 and lived until December 9, 1991.

By Jake Bonneau

James Vardie Wright was vice-president and after Uncle Pete's death, the only one outside of the Dorsey family that owned part of the company. At Claude's death he was the only one in a position to take over. With Auntie and Katherine's approval that was not only what they desired, but in fact, the only logical choice. Of course he was very capable of the task. He had run the business transactions long before Claude came along.

I want to lighten this up a bit and tell a little personal side or two about Vardie. He was affectionately called "Tight" Wright. He wanted a \$1.10 value for every \$1.00 he spent. He did loosen up in later years. In the early to mid 50's he bought a beautiful big Chris-Craft inboard motor boat. It was about 20 ft. long and a beauty. Of course, he rented a marina to keep it in. He bought a lot near Fort Walton and built a beautiful summer home. He had planned to build a new home up on the New Brockton Highway and Florrie had excellent taste. She had an architect to ready the plans for the home she wanted built. True to Vardie's nature, he was sure prices would soon go down. He delayed in building it until 1958. It was, and is, one of the best designed and beautiful homes in Elba. Florrie has kept it looking like she just moved in.

Vardie realized that someone needed to be available to take over the company when he was no longer available. He discussed this with Auntie and Katherine. These three were sole owners. No one else had to be consulted.

I want to stop here and explain that I was never related to the Dorsey's. I called Auntie and Uncle Pete that because Kimmie and I grew up together and I naturally called them what he called them.

Auntie, Katherine, and Vardie decided it was time to sell the trailer company. This was done to a New York holding company. They later changed the name to Dorsey Corporation. The three of them received mostly cash in the transaction. They retained some company stock. I know nothing of the financial details. This would put the company in a position to have competent management when the time arrived.

I am sorry that I now must intercept this for an omission of mine. I passed over the birth of Kimmie and Betty's second son. On November 17, 1951 Betty gave birth to Joe Stephen Dorsey. The name Joe was for her father, the courtly Joe Benton.

Even in his lazier years he would open the car door for his personable wife, Mary Annie Morrow Benton, when she was seated, he closed the door and walked around to the driver's seat. I observed this and could not help but think, "It is a shame that the true Southern gentlemen are a dying breed."

Now back to the Dorsey Trailer Company. Few people in Elba were really aware of the big company we had in Elba. It grew from a small one into a huge one. Rather like a child. You don't notice the day by day growth because you see it everyday and the first thing know, you have a grown person.

I do know that Dorsey had always done a lot of their banking with a large Mobile bank. I am sure they assisted with this very large transaction to the best advantage of the Dorseys and Wrights. Vardie would have seen that they got the best deal possible. Auntie was also very capable.

I don't know whether Vardie made all of these preparations because he knew something about his health, had a premonition, or was just being the usual cautious J. V. Wright. He was not all that old. He and Florrie were on their way to the beach home at Fort Walton one Friday afternoon on July 10, 1959. Vardie was driving. They went through Opp and were on the Flora High-way when Vardie had to pull over and Florrie took over and rushed him back to Opp's Mizell Hospital. He was dead. He was born in 1897. Elba was shocked again.

It took a short while to get a new team in place. This is what Vardie had prepared for. In September of 1959, George L. Collier, an Elba native, took over as president and Theron Kimmie Dorsey took over as vice-president and director of sales. The company continued to do well under the new team. George L. Collier was well versed and educated in economics, and the world of business was requiring more and more of that. Kimmie had been with the company so long that he knew nearly every phase. Henry continued in the Engineering Department. Kimmie and Betty wound up with 5 boys and Henry and Mary Virginia had 2 daughters.

On December 5, 1970 I had placed flowers, that my Mother had prepared, to take to the Till family plot in Magnolia Cemetery in Greenville, in the car. I backed the car up to the back steps of our house. She eased down the rail and I was only 1 step away. I reached over and

opened the door for her to get in. As she turned to sit down, her hip broke and she fell. I immediately got a straight chair and got her into it. At the time I didn't know her hip was broken. I called the Elba Rescue Squad and got her to the hospital. We had to take her to Flowers, it was downtown at the time, and Dr. Furnie Johnston was her doctor. After all examinations were over, he informed me that she had a bad heart and the odds of her not making it through the operation were 60-40. I told him that she was 85 years old and knowing her, if it was just a 10% chance she would say, "Let's take it. That is a chance." I had no problem giving him the go ahead. She was in too much pain. I had nurses with her, but the night before the operation, my niece, Margaret Bonneau English Jones, and I made up our mind that she needed our support the night before the operation so we stayed in the room with her all night and tried not to show any undue concern. We were waiting for her when they returned her to the room. I was standing by her bed when she woke up and she looked up at me and with a faint smile said, "You didn't think I was going to make it did you?" She stayed there until December 23rd and they brought her to the Elba hospital. I had sitters to stay with her. The hip was healing nicely but her age was giving complications. On about January 17th Auntie Dorsey called me and said, "Son, you and Corinne have to eat. I am going to pick you up tonight. I have arranged for the Country Club to have us a meal ready." She drove her car and picked us up. We had a lovely meal and she drove us back. That is how thoughtful and caring she was.

The last time my Mother said anything to me was when I went in and took her hand in mine. She opened her eyes and looked at me and said "My darling boy." She had told me a number of times over the years that I had been everything and more than a mother could ask of a son. It is good not to have a guilt complex when a parent goes. I feel sorry for the many that do. Mother died at about 9:00 p.m., January 20, 1971.

For about 10 hours or more before she left us, Florrie Wright and Josephine Carnley Kendrick insisted they were staying with her until the end. How could we live without friends like that.

WITH JAKE - BY JAKE BONNEAU

The next house was his mother's, Rachael Simmons. She took in boarders. The house above, that was Rufus Adams and his wife, Lyda.

We will go back to the west side of Claxton at the corner of Newton. The house that was on that corner I believe was built by Frank Price. At the date we are talking about I am pretty sure was where Cleve and Daisy Rushing and their daughters, Katherine and Nell lived. There was a garden or cow lot above that to Boutwell's Bakery. Boutwell's Bakery was an Elba institution. It was started by Moley C. Boutwell and his wife, Mary, in 1925. It had a brick oven. They lived next door. They baked a full line of products and became famous for their pound cakes. Over in the afternoon, the wonderful aromas would waft across a large area. It is strange how the smell of fresh baked bread baking excites the taste buds. I suppose it goes back hundreds of years in the

human species. They made two sizes of loaves. The small one was 5¢, one nickel. We young folks would go there and each one of us would get a loaf. It was still hot out of the oven. We would tear one end off and eat it. Then we would eat the hot, soft inside. The outside crust was last. My supper we were ready to eat a regular meal. That was just a snack.

The Boutwell home was next door to the bakery. The next house was where Lelva Hammonds and his wife, Ida and family lived. Nearly everything that came into Elba came by railroad. Lelva took it from the railroad over in New Town and delivered it to the buyer.

The next building was a small country store type building. It was owned and operated by Maggie Butts. She was also the first lady preacher that I knew. She was of the Pentecostal faith. In that day and time she was known as a Holiness Preacher. In that time it was acknowledged by all that she started the Wise Mill Church of God. We all called it the Maggie Butts Church.

Let us now go to November of 1993 in the same area and compare. I will not attempt to tell of all the different changes. Just then and now.

The corner of Simmons and Claxton. The east side, Kilby Johnson D/B/A O. K. Tire Company uses the C. O. Miller building as storage. From there to Buford is a new building where he conducts business. On the west side of Claxton back of the Jim

and Aunt Babe Patrick house, now owned by Henry Clark of Birmingham, Ed Cooper owns the Cooper property and he and Nona have built a house facing Claxton.

On the corner of Buford and east side of Claxton is Mr. Henry's. I feel that they bought part of the property next door so they would have a large lot. Next to them on the corner of Claxton and Collier is an insurance and real estate office.

Across the street starting at Buford, the Baptist pastorium, the Billy Ham property, and Joe Young property are all owned and occupied by Peoples Bank of Elba. The next lot was where the Bonneau home was. In November of 1989 Marvin Robbins came to me and said he had a client that wanted a large lot and I had what he wanted. He offered me a good deal and I told him to let me think about it. I had moved there when I was 2 years old. I had a lot of my Grandparent Till's antique furniture in it and I decided that I'd leave it to relatives. One week before March 17, 1990 the wicker shop from New Brockton called me and wanted to buy all of the wicker furniture on my front porch. I told them it was not for sale, I was leaving it to my relatives. I have never figured it out. They Lord or that Devil did not want me to do that. All of the two settees, two straight chairs, one rocker and one foot stool all went. I had a ceiling fan out on my large front porch and loved to sit out there and

read. The house was so damaged that I gave it to Phillip and Sue Boggan. They moved it way out in the Saddle Hill Community and it looks great. Sue Young Boggan's Great Uncle Lucious Young built that house in 1922.

The house that Osborne Rainer built on the corner of Claxton and Collier was bought by Terry D. and Josephine Carnley Kendrick and they lived there longer than anyone else. Their son, J. Doug Kendrick gave it away and it was moved to the other side of Opp to the Babbie Community. The Jim and Walter Whitman houses are very much like they have been. I'delle, Mrs. J. D. Whitman, still lives there.

The Wiley Bullard house was well kept for many, many years but no one lives there now and I am quite sure it will soon be gone. The Cantalaine house was moved to Tucker Street and it looks very nice.

Smith Harper, Rachael Simmons and Rufus Adams' places were torn down years ago. A 7-11 Store and a paint and body shop went there. Now they are converted to other uses.

Back to the east side of Claxton and Newton. The Frank Price house was bought by Oscar Sawyer and wife, Mrs. Eva Easters and son, Douglas moved in with them. After Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer's death, Mrs. Easters lived there for many years. She is now in the Elba Nursing Home. I don't know who owned the house when the flood of 1990 came. That house has been moved. Next door to that lot is an office building.

Hardees occupies much of the space where Boutwell Bakery and house were located. The Lelva Hammonds property was sold for a Pizza Place. It went under and Bob English has his real estate and insurance office there. The Maggie Butts wooden country store burned in about 1970. I think Coston Morrow was operating it at the time.

The Jim and Walter Whitman houses are all that is left in tact.

"AMAZING"

THIS IS THE
LAST PART OF
Oct. 28, 1993
AS OMITTED
(Part of #31)

On January 28, 1971, just eight days after my Mother's death, Auntie Dorsey drove herself to Enterprise to her doctor to have some tests done as an outpatient. The doctor made an injection of some sort into a blood vessel and she had a violent reaction and died.

She was born December 5, 1894 and died January 28, 1971. She was ten years younger than my Mother. Not only did the Dorsey family lose their matriarch, Elba lost a real leader.

Of course, I went to her home that night. That was the focal point for the family for years.

That was my last time in that house that I began going to in 1932.

THE ELBA CLIPPER NOVEMBER 4, 1993

REMEMBERING

I will try to tell the huge changes that have occurred in one small area that lot from the next house that was in Elba, in about 1935, give or take a few years.

From Simmons Street to the forks ton and Collier was the house built of Brantley-Troy Highway.

C. D. Miller Service Station cornered Claxton and Simmons. He had two or three stalls where he had mechanics to repair cars. next came Sam Reeves' wood working shop with the Mason and Eastern Star meeting upstairs. This was a large unpainted virgin pine building. On that corner of Claxton and Buford was Fulton Clark's first filling station. It was a framed, small place, covered with galvanized tin. The two gas pumps right next to the building were hand operated. The round glass tanks on top held 10 gallons. You pumped the amount of gas you wanted into them and inserted the hose into your tank and gravity let it run from the glass tank into your car. Then a piece of paper and pencil figured how much you owed. He had the first place in Elba that stayed open 24 hours right there in that small, narrow little place.

Across the road from Millers was what we called Aunt Babé Patrick's Newton. This is one of the oldest houses ever on Claxton. Mr. Bullard bought the house and I tried for years to find out who built it but never found out. Jesse W. Blocker told me someone from Brantley built it the old Jordan house. It was unusual in that it did not have the high ceilings of that period. It had at least two apartments. I am pretty sure that is where a promising young attorney, who had married Sara Lee, was living when he died leaving a young wife and small son. His name was Jefferson Albert Carnley, Jr. His father was, for a long time, Probate Judge of Coffee County and one time gubernatorial candidate, I believe that he died of Brill's fever.

Next door to that on the corner of Claxton and Collier lived L. P. Mullins and family. It was a rather large story and half building. Bancroft Cooper, Ferrell Young, Billy Mullins, Fleetwood Carnley, and myself, there could have been others, dug a rather large deep pit in that back yard and since Mr. Mullins was in the lumber business, Billy got lumber for the top.

On the west side on the corner of Claxton and Buford was the First Baptist pastorum, built in 1901 while S. O. Y. Ray was pastor. He was the father of Mrs. J. A. Carnley, Sr. There was a large lot next to the pastorum on Claxton that was

fenced in for a cow or garden. It went to an open ditch that separated the two lots.

On the northeast corner of Claxton and Buford was the house built in 1922 for Osburne Rainer. It faced

Collier, and they lived there for a short time before moving to Montgomery. I believe the Sam Morgans were living there in this period of time. The next house on the east side

of Claxton was the Walter Whitman house. Next to it was the James D. "Jim" Whitman house. Back to the west side next to the Baptist pastorum, was the Billy Ham house. The oe Young house came next. The John Moorer Bonneau was next. This house and the Osburne Rainer place were built at the same time in 1922. The Billy Ham house was a little before and both of the Whitman houses were a little later. You notice it is a very short block between Simmons and Buford. A real long one from Buford to Newton. A really long one from Newton on the west to Adkinson.

On the east of Claxton was the Wiley Bullard home. It rather faced what we called Aunt Babé Patrick's Newton. This is one of the oldest houses ever on Claxton. Mr. Bullard bought the house and I tried for years to find out who built it but never found out. Jesse W. Blocker told me someone from Brantley built it the old Jordan house. It was unusual in that it did not have the high ceilings of that period. It had at least two apartments. I am pretty sure that is where a promising young attorney, who had married Sara Lee, was living when he died leaving a young wife and small son. His name was Jefferson Albert Carnley, Jr. His father was, for a long time, Probate Judge of Coffee County and one time gubernatorial candidate, I believe that he died of Brill's fever.

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REMEMBERING WITH JAKE- By Jake Bonneau

One of the most important locations in the early years of Elba's history is now never given a thought.

Before the levee and canal were built, Beaver Dam Creek came through Elba. The soil coming into the area was clay and shale so the creek was restrained to a rather narrow and shallow bed. By the time it got to what is now Jackson Street, that is the one that crosses from U. S. 84 into Mulberry Heights, the soil became a sandy loam. Over the thousands of years this soil washed deeper and wider than the stream coming in. This washed into and down Pea River. Where Beaver Dam was still narrow and had a firm bank and bed was an ideal spot for a dam. No one knows when the first dam was built here, it was longer ago than anyone that is living today. The first dam was probably for a grist mill. Everyone needed corn meal to survive in the early years.

If you drive across Jackson from #84 in the winter when the vegetation has been killed by the cold, you can look down and see large concrete pieces of the last dam that was destroyed by the U. S. Corps of Engineers when they diverted Beaver Dam outside of the levee and stopped water from the original course.

In 1908, someone installed a small dynamo, or we usually say generator, at this location. It seems more like an experimental affair than commercial. As far as I can find out, only a few places were wired to receive electricity. Ernest "Pap" Owen was the man that looked over the operation. It was turned on about dark and was left on for a very few hours before being turned off. People would go up there to see them turn the lights on. I have been told that the bulbs of that day gave off a yellowish glow.

The Baptist Church of Elba was built on the corner of Court and Buford. It was the first Baptist church in downtown Elba and was built in 1882. Oscar English was to marry Clyde Kimmey and they wanted to marry by electric lights so they picked 8:00 p.m. at the Baptist Church because of the lights. I have tried to get the exact date, but have not been able. It was June 1911.

No one knows for sure but I believe the town of Elba decided to build the dam and power plant down the Pea River. David Henry James was the person selected to build the Elba Dam. Not the electrical part. He

came to Elba and I am sure it took several years to build the dam. The run-a-round, and all of the things it took to make it a complete job. While D. H. James was here, he met Essie Rowe, daughter of Jesse Henderson Rowe and Ida Kimmey Rowe. They lived on Putnam and the house at 801 Putnam is still there. It survived the two floods and has been redone for rental by Mr. Mrs. Fred Smith, Sr. Dr. Kimmey tore down the old Kimmey home across the street and built his clinic there. Oscar and Clyde Kimmey English built next door to the old Kimmey home in 1913.

David Henry James and Essie Rowe were married in Elba. D. H. James moved to Enterprise and had a very successful career with business interests in Elba over the years. I have tried for years to find out about the electrical system. By the way, the dam must have been built between 1910 and 1913.

Richard Earl James is now retired and although he has a home in Birmingham, some few years ago he bought a small place near his first cousin, Patsy Pinckard, who married Ralph Sharpless. He is in Elba a lot and reads The Elba Clipper. He gave me information I could have never found else where.

His grandfather, John Henry James was working at Newport (Virginia) News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co. where he learned to make electric motors and generators from scratch. He took a course from International Correspondence school in electrical engineering. This was about 1900. The early years of electricity. This made him very much in demand all over the United States and indeed, the whole part of this continent. When Richard Earl James was a tot, his Father worked for a mining company in Montana, he next built a steam generating plant in Yukon Territory in Canada. Next was Skagway, Alaska and then came Northern Mexico. There the family learned a lot of the Spanish language.

Soon after all this, Mr. James met Mr. Enzor of Troy, Alabama. He is the man that owned the Enzor Theater where many Elba people would on occasion go to see movies. I remember going to at least two that he updated at different times.

Mr. Enzor told John Henry James that Elba was needing someone to install and erect generators, lines and

what it took to get an electrical system going. He accepted the job. The generators were first used by the T.V.A. on the Tennessee River, but were too small for them. They were shipped to Elba by railroad. I had no idea how they got them to the power plant and lowered them into position. It is hard to believe the ingenuity of people that found a way to get things done with no modern methods.

I learned of the T.V.A. generator by talking to Ed. Hatcher. He and Bill Morgan ran the power plant for a long, long time. Bill Morgan and his wife, Salome, had a daughter, Mary Louise, that was in our age group. The Morgans lived in the house near the dam. Bill and Salome made all of us teenagers feel so welcome that we found excuses to visit Mary Louise.

John Henry James and his crew had to build the electrical system from the beginning. Transmission lines had to be built from the power plant into Elba. Buildings had to be wired. This was a major undertaking and a huge advancement to the welfare of Elba.

Of course, a man that moved from place to place doing specialized work like John Henry James, took his family with him. His eldest son was named for his grandfather, Richard Earl James. He was enrolled in school in Elba. According to Zadie Rowe, and the best of my memory from talking to her, the lights of Elba were turned on in late 1915. Of course, Mr. James had to do work getting everything operating and training people to operate and maintain this new unknown machinery. While the son was going to Elba High School, he met Ida Belle Connor. She was the daughter of Benjamin F. Connor, Sr. and his wife, Hattie. They lived on the left side of Buford Street just before you got to White Water Creek. The sons were Gordon, Claude, and B. F. Jr. Her

sisters were Bonnie, who married Walter Whitman, Annie Lou, who married Murray Fletcher.

Mr. James apparently completed his work here and his next job was near Pinar Del Rio in western Cuba. He wrote his son, who was still in school in Elba, and told him to quit school and come to help him in Cuba. He did as his father directed. After being in Cuba for awhile, he realized he wanted to marry Ida Belle Conner so he returned to Elba

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and married her and took her back to Cuba with him. When they realized that their first child was on the way, Ida Belle Conner James returned to her parents home to give birth to Richard Earl James, Jr. He was always called Earl. His father was always Richard. Earl was born here March 7, 1921. Little did anyone know that the date would many years later be a infamous date in Elba. It is also ironical that his birth date was the same as the flood of that date in 1990 and the flood of March 1, 1929 washed the Conner house completely away. The levee to he left of the Crooked Bridge over White Water is about where it stood.

I think that this also is most unusual. I вид Henry James did the construction work on the dam, the power plant, etc. The electrical system was done by John Henry James. These two were not related and never heard of each other. I don't really know if they ever met, but Elba furnished brides to both families.

It is rather strange that I have wondered for years about how the old Elba Power Dam came into existence at Earl James, by reading my column, upplied me with the information.

I thin that for the sake of the younger generation, I should tell them so nothing about the earlier years. When the first electricity came to Elba, no one had anything but lights. Nearly every home, as well as businesses, had drop cord ceiling lights. A cord hung down from the ceiling with a socket on the end in which a light bulb, of the wattage wanted, could be screwed into it. A switch was on the socket that you turned on or off. There were no wall plugs because there was nothing made at that time to plug in. Electric fans came first. I believe the first electric refrigerators came to Elba in the early 1930s. It had a large round coil on top that held the cooling mechanism. There were very few street lights and they had about 50 watt bulbs with a round reflector above. The Pea River Power Plant only served the small center section of Elba. We finally were interconnected with the Andalusia area and some time in the 1960s it was no longer feasible to operate the Elba Power Plant. It served its purpose and served it well.

Extension of
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NOVEMBER 18, 1993

THE ELBA CLIPPER NOVEMBER 25, 1993

Dear Editor,

Elba has been through lots of trials and tribulations since it was founded in 1853. We survived the flood of March 1929. We survived the Great Depression years of the 1930's. We survived the March 1990 flood.

When Fred Moore was running for re-election, he dropped by to see me. I did not support him when he was elected. I told him I was born and reared in Elba and loved my hometown. I said, "Fred, you worked long and hard to get us through that terrible flood. You have surpassed anyone's expectations the way that you have gotten financial help for Elba. No one dreamed we would be in this good condition. I would feel like an ingrate if I did not support you."

I have since been told that the city had about \$300,000 available when he left office.

I am not sure Elba will survive this present administration.

God Will Help Us All,
Jake Beau



THE ELBA CLIPPER DECEMBER 31, 1993

Remembering

With Jake

By Jake Bonneau

First, let me express my gratitude to the many who let me know by telling me directly, by telephone, and even by letter, that they enjoyed my writing and to please keep it up.

At my age, God has blessed me greatly when he gave me the ability to be of service to mankind.

* * * * *

Years ago when you came off of the Pea River Bridge onto Davis Street you could see all the way to the dead end at Adkinson. There sat one of the most impressive homes in Elba. It was two story but what made it so special were the two massive Ionic columns on either side of the entrance. That portion of the porch jutted out a little further than the porch that ran to each side. It had several small columns supporting it.

I had always been intrigued with those columns that had to be 30" or 36" in diameter and rose to hold the porch up to the second floor. This was a high ceiling house so they were tall. The house was built for Frank Rainer in about 1910. He was a brother of Young Wood and Walter Rainer.

As you know, I have always been curious and wanted to know how things were done in the days before any mechanical means were available in the way of cranes or lifts. I was talking to William Jacobs who was born in 1895 and died in December of 1971. We all called him Willie or most often Jackie. He was a carpenter. In our conversation I was asking about some of the early homes of Elba. He told me that as a big teenager he helped his uncle, by the name of Scroggins, to build several homes. The Rainer home was one of them. I immediately wanted to know about those big columns. He told me that they were shipped into Elba from somewhere in Georgia, by rail. The two of them filled a flat bed railroad car. His uncle got a log cart from the saw miller. I am sure lots of people never heard of a log cart. It had two large wheels in front with a tongue for two oxen or mules to pull it. A pole dressed down to about 8" smooth ran back in a slip sleeve onto the back two wheels. This could be moved forward or back according to the length to be hauled. This cart was taken

over to the railroad and they slid one column at a time onto the cart and brought them to the already roughly constructed house. I then wanted to know how they raised them into place. Man power alone could not do it. He said they took block and tackle up to the second floor and pulled them up into place. There has never been any columns, before or since, to compare with those.

Mr. Frank Rainer sold the house to Jim Marsh in 1920. I never heard of any of that family of Rainers ever returning to Elba for any reason. Mr. Rainer and his family moved to Mobile. I believe he was a banker.

Mr. Marsh, like so many in Elba at that time, drilled a flowing well in the yard of his home. James J. Marsh's wife was named Pearl. Mr. Marsh died in February 1931. Mrs. Marsh lived upstairs after his death and rented the lower floor. She died in May of 1948.

Getheral and Doris Whitman Pinckard and family were living on the lower floor when the house burned to the ground on June 13, 1950. The Marsh estate owned it. Robert Marsh is the only member of that family left living.

How vast changes are made and we hardly take notice. That was a vacant lot for many years, owned by Fulton F. Clark. Now where that house sat is the new U.S. #84 Highway, that was to make a straight route west, goes through.

Willie Jacobs married Mamie Owen. There were four Owen boys and four girls. Gus Owen, an attorney, was the oldest. Mamie was the youngest.

Several years ago, Judge Marion Brunson asked me to help get information on Elba's older homes. I did and a number were listed in the Clipper. One that I could not find enough on was the house on Davis next to the Methodist church. It has always been one of a kind in Elba. The exterior design is very attractive and I think unique. It was built by a Dr. Roberts, a relative of the Lee family. I would have reason to believe it was built around 1875-1885. When I grew up, and many people older than I, it was always called the Dan Knight place.

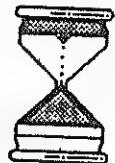
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Daniel David Knight was Sheriff of Coffee County for a long time. Thanks to Sheriff Brice Paul. He gave me the info that D.D. Knight served from 1892 - 1900. Again from 1903-1907. A total of 12 years. He apparently bought the house when Dr. Roberts moved to Geneva. D. D. Knight was born in 1857 and died in 1926. He is buried at Elba Evergreen Cemetery in the Jordan Brooks family lot. Jordan Brooks married a Blue and so did Knight.

It seems that Knight was sick a good while before he died and did not pay his taxes. After his death, M. A. "Gus" Owen bought his property for taxes and paid less than \$1,000 for it. I have no idea what arrangement was made between him and his family. Gus Owen never lived there, but some of his kin has owned it ever since. Ruth Jacobs Mooney inherited it and lived there until she died there. Her daughter, Mahlon Mooney, inherited it from her and was living there when the flood of March 1990 occurred. She still owns it and keeps the grounds up, but she bought a home on Highland Drive. I have no idea of what will happen to that Elba historical home. The original window blinds are still on the house.

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REMEMBERING WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau



A few people have asked me about a structure for many years that was on the Courthouse Square. I do remember it, but do not know exactly what to call it. I think "pump shelter" would be the most appropriate name.

It was located on the north side of the courthouse. About 5 feet from Simmons Street was a structure that had 4 brick supports about 22" each. There were two on each side of the fairly wide concrete walkway from street to courthouse. They supported a hip roofed wooden structure about 10 feet by 12 feet. In the center of this sidewalk was a deep well pump. It had a small, shallow concrete basin formed around the pump with a drain pipe to the street so that water would flow out until it was dry up. I say deep well pump because the smaller pump only pumped water from 10-20 feet. The larger pumps weren't much deeper and you had better water. A water dipper hung there for ever one to drink from. On each side of this structure just off the sidewalk was a wooden bench for people to sit down and talk or rest. Everyone in the early days either walked to town or came by horses or most often it was by wagon. The wagon not only carried people but what was bought in town was also taken home. This pump was placed there so long ago that it has to be a guess as to when. I am sure that it was there in the late 1800's. Men did most all of the trading and buying for their family. I know two or three widow women that did all of that and I mean they did just as good as the men. Mrs. Bama Donaldson, nea Curtis, and the Widow Mixson, now Brockton, are two that come to mind. The pump shed gave a place not only to drink water and rest, but come noon time they could buy sardines and crackers, a soft drink and moon pie or other easy to buy eats. None cost more than 5¢ or 10¢ each, and go sit there and eat. It was a favorite hang out. The flowing well was dug on the southwest corner of the Square in the early 1930's. Like almost all things that once were treasured objects when this shed and pump were no longer needed, it was done away with. The flowing well had a concrete basin built around it about 8 feet in diameter and 18" above the surrounding area. Con-

crete approaches from Davis and Court streets led a few feet to drinking fountains that had pipes bored and secured to the large pipe of the well. Cool, clear water flowed constantly. Someone was either walking or cars stopping there at nearly anytime, day and night. Boys on the way home from a date found it a good place to meet. There was, for longer than anyone could remember, three massive oak trees on the Courthouse Square. One on the southeast side, one on the northeast and northwest. I cannot quite pinpoint when the County Commission decided they were diseased and were dangerous to the courthouse and people. I believe it was early 1941. They stirred up a real controversy. I don't think anyone could remember when they were not there. Of course as in most cases, the ones in charge won and they took them out.

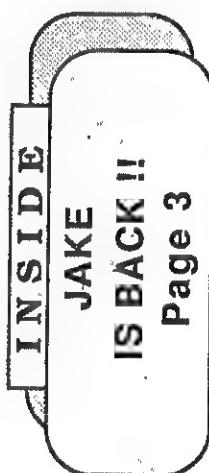
I hope someone used all that good oak in their fireplaces. Pine was always used for the wood cooking stoves.

The next big controversy that I recall came when WWII was over and merchants had goods to sell that had not been available. People, at least most, had money saved and could afford to buy. Business was booming. This was about 1946. The City of Elba was needing money. (Doesn't every government, at any level, always need it?) The city fathers noted that it was difficult to find a place to park around the Square and up Davis to Claxton and Simmons to Claxton. The way to raise money was parking meters, including the Courthouse Square. Wouldn't it be great if Elba now had problems to park and to do business. At any rate, the County Commission informed the city that the curb on the Square was county property and they could not put meters on their property. The city had a bright idea. They poured a concrete curb of their own. Only one form had to hold the concrete. They used the county curb on one side and a wooden one that held it on the street side. The meters were installed into this. It is plain to see where they once were. The extra curb is there.

The County Commission would not be outdone by the City of Elba so they decided to make parking inside the Courthouse Square. The sidewalks of Elba were paved before any

of the streets. In a few places, you still see the logo of "Tuscaloosa Concrete Co., Tuscaloosa, Ala.", that they stamped into the wet cement. Probably with a cast iron marker they had made for that purpose to advertise their business. Everyone today knows how to pour concrete. In that day it apparently was a special work.

I imagine that the merchants of today wish parking was so difficult that it caused problems.





Remembering With Jake

I recall going to *The Elba Clipper* in around 1939 to 1941 and watching Renzo C. Bryan operate a linotype machine. The building was less than half the size of the present one. It was in the same location, Mr. Bryan was the owner, publisher, editor, and printer. The paper usually wasn't but four pages. He had a teenage boy known as a "Printer's Devil" as a helper. He was trying to learn the business. The only other full time employee that I was aware of was C. B. McDowell. He walked around the Square and stopped in businesses to get news of interest. He also did anything he could to help get the paper out.

The linotype machine was a big bulky thing. A flexible metal cord, with electric wire inside, hung from the top of the machine with a metal reflector shielding the light bulb over the keyboard. He pressed the proper key and molten lead ran from the heated container to form the letters to be pressed together to print the correct subjects. Mr. Bryan wore the first pair of trifocal eyeglasses I had ever seen. He told me that in his work he had to see close up, at arms length and of course far off and they were necessary. That linotype was a big cumbersome thing, but it was great in its day.

I asked Ferrin Cox if he had ever used one. He said that one was there, unused, when he bought the paper. Someone offered him \$350.00 for it and he was glad to see it go.

The obituary of my Father was first printed by Renzo Bryan by linotype. I was 22 years old and he was 55. It seems so strange today, I thought he was an old man.

Obituary of John M.

Bonneau

(From *The Elba Clipper*, March 19, 1942)

"No death in many months in this vicinity has caused more widespread sorrow than the sudden passing on last Wednesday evening of John M. Bonneau.

Mr. Bonneau who was 55 years of age, was a life-long resident of Coffee County, having been born at Victoria on January 25, 1887. He was the son of the late Dr. W.H. Bonneau and Annie Connelly Bonneau. While a small boy he moved to Elba with his parents and after reaching young manhood secured a job in a hardware store operated by the late J.E. Edwards.

After a few years he became part owner and manager of the business. Through the years the establishment, Bonneau-Jeter Hardware Company, has become one of the largest in this section. In addition to the large hardware and furniture business, the company operates funeral parlors in Elba and Brantley. He was widely known throughout the county and this section of the state and numbered his friends by the hundreds.

Although he has been suffering from a heart ailment for several months, his death came unexpectedly. He complained of not feeling well Wednesday morning and remained in bed. Still no uneasiness was felt as to his condition. He was stricken while sleeping and passed peacefully, thus fulfilling a wish he had often made.

Mr. Bonneau was a member of the Baptist Church, a number of fraternal societies and civic clubs, and was always deeply interested in affairs of the community. He gave generously and willingly of his time and means for any worthy cause, and his deeds of charity are without number. The City of Elba, as well as countless individuals, have lost a true friend whose place cannot be easily filled.

Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Mamie Till Bonneau; two sons, Lieutenant C.R. Bonneau, Camp Bowie, Texas and Jake Bonneau of Elba; two daughters, Mrs. Hazel Jackson of Opp and Mrs. Corinne English of Elba. One sister, Mrs. J.O. Rowe of Enterprise; two grandchildren and a number of other relatives also survive.

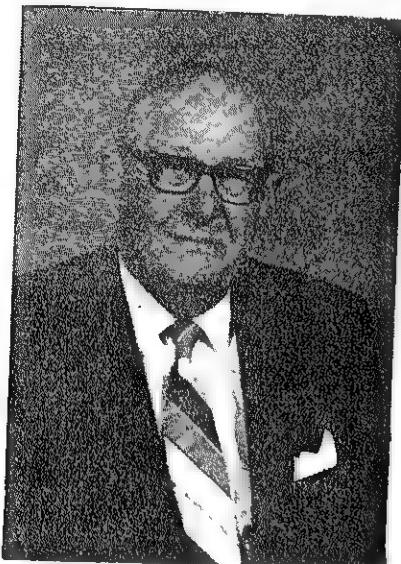
Funeral services were held at the Baptist Church Friday afternoon at two o'clock. Rev. J.A. Timmerman, pastor, Rev. B.S. Franklin, former pastor, Elder Jack Mitchell and Minister James C. Dixon took part in the services. Interment was in the Evergreen Cemetery. Mr. Robert A. McGhee of Troy assisted with the funeral arrangements.

Active pallbearers were: W.W. Ham, W.T. Whitman, Sr., J.T. Young, T.T. Rhodes, T.D. Kendrick, James English, W.M. Brunson, and R.C. Bryan.

Elba's Evergreen Cemetery receives \$100,000 donation

by Ferrin Cox
Publisher

The City of Elba owned, Ever-



A. L. ELLIS

green Perpetual Care Cemetery received a shot in the arm recently with the official notification that A. L. Ellis, of Tarpon Springs, FL, was donating \$100,000 to the trust fund.

This donation from Mr. Ellis will almost double the principal amount of the trust fund.

Committee members explained they get some donations throughout the year and a number of people have indicated they have named the fund to receive money from their estate upon their death.

The idea of a perpetual care cemetery was the brainchild of the late Mrs. Gladys Dorsey. She began the fund with a \$5,000 donation. Mrs. Dorsey died in 1971. The fund did not receive IRS tax exempt status until March 31, 1972. From that small beginning, the fund had grown to a balance of over \$100,000 before the donation by Ellis.

With the increase, the perpetual care fund is inching ever closer to having enough interest income to maintain and improve the cemetery

in the manner the public would like to see it maintained. Optional expense items on the wish list for the committee are opening additional land for burial plots and the possibility of constructing a fence around both existing sections of the existing cemetery.

The money will be given to the fund in increments of \$20,000 over a five year period.

Mr. Ellis, a retired bank executive, is a native of Elba and has several family members buried in the local cemetery. He informed the cemetery committee of his action through copies of an Ellis Foundation resolution and a letter to committee member and personal friend Jake Bonneau.

The committee accepted the money with gratitude. Their only regret was that Mr. Ellis was traveling and couldn't be in Elba to personally accept their thanks.

The interest from the trust fund is the only money received by the committee and is used to pay for mowing and other upkeep of the cemetery.



CEMETERY COMMITTEE MEMBERS are shown above as they officially accept a \$100,000 donation to the Perpetual care fund. The donation by Elba native A. L. Ellis will be paid over a five year period. Shown above are from left, seated: Caretaker Troy Gideon, Jake Bonneau, Chairman John W. Sharpless and D. M. English. Standing are Totsye Rhodes, Charlotte Clark, Doris Pinkard, Della Whitman, Lorene Sawyer and Ruth Mack.



Remembering

With Jake

In about 1930-32 when I was 10 to 12 years old, I was intrigued by a nice elderly lady that came to our home to visit my great aunt. She was Mrs. Ella Treadwell Brunson. My grandmother's sister was Lucy Connolley Warren. Her husband, Willard Warren, died in 1918. Her oldest son, Robert, died of typhoid fever in 1908. Her other son also died. She had no family, so my Mother and Father did the only Christian thing they could. She came to live with us. No one had ever thought of nursing homes.

Willard Warren's mother was a Treadwell so she was related through marriage to Miss Ella. What attracted my youthful attention was that Aunt Lucy and Miss Ella were hard of hearing. Miss Ella brought her ear trumpet and Aunt Lucy had hers. As implied, they were shaped like a trumpet, the curved, small piece fit into the ear and the large end you talked into. They talked loudly into the horns.

Miss Ella was the widow of John Franklin Brunson, Sr. and lived in a large story and a half house that was the only structure on that block. The house was in the same location as the present Elba City Hall.

John F. Brunson had a large farm east of Woodland Grove. That community was named Brunson. He was postmaster there until the office was closed in 1904. He had a cotton gin, a grist mill, and sawmill on Oak Creek. I'm sure that all of this machinery worked very slowly compared to today's high speed of everything we do. In that day and time people were not in a big hurry. Just to get the job done was good enough. When he decided to build a house in Elba, he sawed his own timber and I am sure he brought it to Elba by mules, or possibly oxen, and built that large house in 1908. It covered much of that small block.

To the best of my knowledge, this couple had three sons and three daughters that lived to maturity.

John F. Brunson, Sr. was born in 1856 and died here in Elba in 1916. They carried his body back to Woodland Grove and buried him close to an infant child of the couple that died before they came to Elba. As time went by, most of their children married. Mrs. Ella Treadwell Brunson was born in 1858 and died in 1938.

Will M. Brunson (I feel that he was William, but I never heard anything but Will) married Annie Rushing. John Franklin Brunson (here again, he never used Jr.) married Leola Estelle Johnson. Emmett Treadwell Brunson married Foye Thomas. Lucy Brunson married Lee English. Beatrice Brunson married George Saxon. Mabel Brunson never married.

I knew all of them with the exception of Beatrice. I feel sure I knew her, but not enough for details.

When Mrs. Ella T. Brunson died she was buried in the Elba Evergreen Cemetery in the Brunson lot. Will and my Father were good friends and he had Bonneau-Jeter Funeral Home to disinter his father and infant and the remains brought to Evergreen Cemetery and interned next to Miss Ella. I was in high school so I feel sure that Comer DeVane and possibly Hoehn Michel handled that. Dud English tells me that he was present at Woodland Grove when that occurred.

I would not dare to attempt to tell anything about the Brunsons and take on more than one family. I'll try to make this one interesting.

After Miss Ella's death, her daughter, Mabel, continued to live in that big house. I suppose it became hers. She made it into five apartments, four down stairs and one upstairs. From all I have heard, it must have been a delightful place to live. At that time it was probably the largest rental property in Elba. It had a big porch and a large living room that you entered into from the front door. These were used by everyone that lived there. I have found so many families that lived there. They all spoke highly of the time they spent there with the neighborly feelings of sitting on the porch and talking, playing cards and games in the large and beautiful living room.

I think it is a good way to show how times have changed along with the value of the dollar to tell this. Oscar and Betty Vaughan were living there in about 1950. Their apartment was small and the family was growing. A larger apartment became available and Oscar asked Mabel Brunson if he could have it. She said, "Well you are paying \$15.00 a month now and that one is \$20.00. Do you think you can afford it?"

Emmett Treadwell Brunson became a medical doctor and moved to Samson to practice. I only recall talking to him one time. I went to Samson to his office to get him to sign a death certificate and he was very pleasant. He was born in 1893 and died in 1973. He is buried at Evergreen Cemetery. His son became a doctor and practiced in Enterprise. He was Dr. Emmett Thomas Brunson. He was born in 1931 and died in 1982. Mrs. Foye Thomas Brunson died very recently and was brought here from Birmingham for burial between her husband and son.

Lucy Brunson was born in 1895 and died in 1969. She married Lee English, and they had three children. Bill, who I knew years ago and haven't seen in a coon's age; Dud M. English is married and lives here; and Nell English who is retired and still lives in Montgomery. The Montgomery Advertiser recently carried a full page in the Sunday paper about her wonderful volunteer efforts and how effective they were for the good of mankind. That is a good way to spend one's time.

I will assure you that I will not write a real long series, but I will have to tell about the others next time.



REMEMBERING WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau

Will M. Brunson was an Elba citizen of prominence. He was always called Will, but I felt he was named William at birth. He married Annie Rushing. When I first recall seeing him he was walking up Court Street towards his home. Everyone that lived down town and worked down town walked to and from work. He was a lawyer and in this day he could be called an entrepreneur. In that day and time they said, "Will Brunson is as full of ideas as a dog is ears." He had an office in the old bank building, upstairs on the southeast corner of Davis and Court. He was a friend of some major Alabama political figures. I am not sure, but I think he held some position while Governor Bibb Graves was in office. I know he was in Montgomery quite a lot. He was also a friend of Congressman Lister Hill. Hill later became a major Senator of the United States. He had a son named William Lister. I always felt the first name was for himself and knew the Lister was in respect for Hill. While I am in politics, I think that it is interesting to note that when the Democratic Convention was held in 1931, Will Brunson was chairman of the Alabama delegation. When they started calling on the states for their vote, of course this was broadcast on radio. Alabama came first and Will Brunson stood up and declared loud and clear, "Alabama casts all of its votes for Franklin Delano Roosevelt." The rest is history.

Elba is still a small town, but for its size we have had more insurance companies than any place I know of. I believe it was Tobe Rhodes' idea to form an insurance company. He and Will Brunson started one. I don't know anything other than that they parted ways, but both families have been associated with the business and are today.

Mrs. Will Brunson, Miss Annie, was an energetic lady. She converted her living room and dining room into one large room. I am sure it was Will's idea to install the most unique table this area, or perhaps anywhere, had ever seen. This was around 1940. It was oak and two tiers. A round structure about 10 feet across. The top tier cleared the bottom on about one inch. The top was about 1 foot recessed so you had room for plates, napkins and silver and of course your tea or coffee. The top section had an electric motor concealed underneath the table and it was geared to slowly rotate so the food passed in front of you and you

served yourself and replaced it. The food was varied and all of it was very good. Miss Annie had cooks and dish washers, but she was right in the middle of all of it. They bought the house next door and rented rooms there. All of this was located on Collier Street at the end of North Court. The Lions Club had their weekly meeting there. I remember that the front porch had a trellis running across it and when the grapes that grew there were ripe, we stood out there before the meeting and pulled and ate grapes.

I was elected President of the Lions Club while we were meeting there. At the end of my tenure, they presented a small metal lion with my name engraved on it. It is one of my few possessions that survived the March 1990 flood.

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed going to that pleasant place with its wonderful food and unusual atmosphere. If I remember correctly, they erected a connecting hallway between the two houses. Before they bought the new house next to their home it was where Mr. and Mrs. George Lindsey and their son, John Frank, lived.

Another thing that I recall about Will Brunson is that he always had something in his hand to nibble on. Peanuts, pecans, or anything small that he enjoyed.

I have forgotten what caused the death of a young son, but I remember Grover's death. He was born in 1924 and died in 1936.

My Father died in 1942 and Will Brunson was one of the pall bearers.

Will M. Brunson was born in 1889 and died in 1947. Bonneau-Jeter Funeral Home handled the funeral and I conducted the funeral. It was held from the Baptist Church on Simmons. It was the largest crowd at any funeral that I ever conducted.

Annie Rushing Brunson was born in 1898 and died in 1957. At the time of her death, I remember thinking that it was unusual for a lady to die of a heart attack. William Lister Brunson was born in 1921 and he died of a heart attack in 1978. The ones that survive the Will and Annie Brunson family are Jack R. Brunson of Elba; Jerry of Enterprise; Marjorie of Enterprise who married Dr. J. E. Pittman; and Patsy who married Ned Folmar who died of a heart attack. I believe she lives in Glenwood. I have not seen her in years, but I remember well that she kept a horse back of her parents house and loved to ride it.

I also remember when Jerry played basketball real well. I took a car load to Eufaula to play. They were coughing and felt bad. The coach was concerned about their ability to play. I had a druggist friend there and called him to fix something for the cough. At that time controls were not too strict on medications. He mixed up a bottle of medicine and told me it had lots of codeine in it and not take too much. The best I remember, before that game was over, they were floating through the air like Michael Jordan.

I'll finish this Brunson family next week.

Remembering With Jake

by Jake Bonneau



Elba folks are a tough and resiliant people. They came through the flood of March 14, 1929. There was no government aid to help with recovery at that time. Then came the double whammy. The Stock Market crash came in October of 1929. People helped each other and somehow rebuilt.

At the time of the October crash, the Great Depression began. Elba had two banks and both of them failed as did thousands all over the country. There was no where in town to cash checks or transact business. Along comes John F. Brunson (He never used the Jr.) who saw the need for some way to assist people and business and of course, himself. He started an exchange in one of the old bank buildings on the southeast corner of Davis and Court. He charged a fee for the convenience of not having to go out of town to do business. This worked well so in 1938 he formed it, with stock holders, into the Elba Exchange Bank. Of course, he became its first president, and it did well.

He had four daughters, but he saw great potential in a young Elba native, Oscar Vaughan, Jr. Oscar, Sr. had a retail store on the corner of Court and Simmons. I believe that at one time that was the location of Patrick Drug Store, long before my time, but I do think Oscar, Sr. first had a grocery store and then converted into clothing, shoes, etc. John F. Brunson took Oscar, Jr. into the bank and began to groom him to higher goals.

John F. Brunson had married Leola Estelle Johnson. They had the four daughters that I mentioned. I will give their married names: Catherine Johnson Lucning, Eugenia Claire Day, Eleanor McDuffie Sparks and Judith Hampton Bullock.

The Brunson families, other than John, had a great deal of stock in the bank. Of course, John had every one that he could talk into it to sell stock to Oscar.

A decision was brought before the Board of Directors in 1963 to erect a new and modern bank building. Mabel Brunson owned the large Brunson house that had been made into five apartments, of which she lived in one. I recall her working in the Post Office at one time. They

prevailed on her to sell them that house, which is bounded by Collier, Factory, Buford and Yelverton. They tore down the house. A small section was saved and moved to that small street which turns to the right as you start over the Pea River Bridge. This was made into Mabel's new home. By the way, the family and lots of

her many friends called her "Meb".

Mabel Ross Brunson was born in 1897 and she died in 1975. She is buried near her parents at Evergreen Cemetery.

She, like many of the Brunson family, held stock in National Security Insurance. At her death, she willed her stock to the Baptist Church on Simmons. So, she still contributes to her church.

This was done in the later part of 1963. Oscar Vaughan, Jr. became president of the Elba Exchange Bank on January 1, 1964. The bank moved into its new building and the grand opening was held on February 15, 1965.

Mr. John remained active in the business for a long time after they moved into the new building and as he sat in his office he would sometimes remark that it felt rather odd that he was now sitting in the same location, doing business, where he once slept.

The bank continued to do well and over a period of time a decision was made to erect another new bank building. Oscar and some of his board members traveled far and wide getting ideas on what type of building they wanted. They had excellent taste. They chose the Williamsburg style.

Again, another location had to be selected for the new bank. Low and behold it was the property of another Brunson. Will and Annie had died, but their estate owned the large property on Collier. A gorgeous new building was erected in that spot and the grand opening for that new Elba Exchange Bank was held June 24, 1980. Probably a record was established by Oscar. I am sure very few bank presidents had two new banks opened during their tenure. Of course, Mr. John Brunson was proudly there to greet the people. After all, this was his creation.

As time passed on, the business world changed to the point that local banking was passe. It was evident that, to really stay current, it was feasible to unite with a large banking group.

This came about on July 31, 1985 when Elba Exchange Bank became a member of the SouthTrust Banking group.

That beautiful building was badly damaged by the flood of March 1990, but placed in as good or better shape. It is today a beautiful building and a design of timeless beauty.

John Franklin Brunson was born in 1888 and died in 1980. Leola Estelle J. Brunson was a moving force to establish an Elba library. The Elba Study Club held a book shower at the home of Mrs. Lamar Rainer, Sr. A library was set up in the home of Mrs. John F. Brunson. So that made her husband founder of the first bank since the Depression years and the first Elba library was in her home. The Elba library has her picture in the entrance hall and she is honored as the founder there. There are too many Brunsons for me to attempt to cover anything but this family. It all started with me recalling Miss Ella and my Aunt Lucy and their car trumps.

By the way, Miss Ella died in 1938 at age 80 and Aunt Lucy died on Thanksgiving Day of 1937 at the age of 75.

Remembering With Jake

by Jake Bonneau



We, as a people, have always been interested in politics. That is the true test of a representative government, to be concerned about who is elected to represent you.

Some of the details I am about to tell occurred at least 50 years ago. I will be as accurate as possible.

I believe it was in 1940 when I was just shy of my 21st birthday when George Andrews had sized the situation up, and I feel sure that he sought the advice of Winton Malcom Blount about running for Congress of the United States.

George Andrews was County Solicitor of Bullock County. Today they are called district attorney. Mr. Blount was a leading citizen of Union Springs. He was nicknamed "Bo". Mr. "Bo", as I called him, was a very impressive man. Rather large, always well dressed in a three piece suit with a heavy gold chain going from one vest pocket, across an ample girth, to the other.

Henry Bascom Steagall of Ozark had been in office since 1914. It is true now as it was then, once in office for a long time, it is very difficult to defeat a sitting Congressman. George was aware that Steagall would not go on much longer. There was no TV and most contact had to be going into all the localities. At that time, this was the 3rd District and I believe there were 10 counties.

The best I recall, George and Mr. Blount came to Elba and I do not recall how, but James Wise, Sam Sawyer, and I met with them and agreed to do what we could to elect George Andrews to Congress. Don Fuller of New Brockton agreed to serve. At that time Elba and Enterprise were the same size. Dothan was slightly larger than Enterprise of today. Lewis Sessions and George Proctor were the two I recall in Enterprise.

The election day came and George Andrews made a very impressive showing for his first time to run for Congress. World War II came along and George was a member of the Naval Reserve. I believe he was called into active duty before the 1942 election. At any rate, I do not recall the 1942 election, but I vividly recall that Henry B. Steagall, who was born May 19, 1873, died in office on November 22, 1943. He had served nearly 30 years. George was a Naval Lieutenant on a ship in the South Pacific. I believe his opposition was Hubert Farmer of Dothan.

He ran several times against George. Bo Blount had a list and knew nearly all of George's supporters. Bo Blount came to all the counties and got everyone working for George. We won very handily. It was something to elect a man who was not even in the District. Of course the Navy had to let the elected U.S. Congressman serve. George Andrews took office March 14, 1944.

Winton Malcom "Bo" Blount was born in 1890 and died June 1944. He was only 54 years old, but like my Father, who died at age 55, I thought of him as being older. At any rate, he was a very impressive man. His son, Winton M. "Red" Blount, is nearer my age, but I knew his father much better.

George was a very effective Member of Congress. He ran several times with little or no opposition. I recall one time that Dothan was determined to elect Hubert Farmer. We only had paper ballots and I, with many others, have counted votes long after breakfast time. It was not a very good way to be sure of no evil doings.

One election I recall was when Houston County would not turn in their vote. They were waiting to see how many votes they needed to win. Sam Sawyer and I went to see Marion Farris, Chairman of Coffee County Democratic Committee and told him what was going on. At that time, election laws were very lax and the chairman was all powerful. He said we can out wait them. We called the *Dothan Eagle* and asked for the returns. They put the pressure on and the returns came in. We narrowly won. That was the only close election that George ever had.

Elizabeth Bullock came to Elba in the 1930's as a home demonstration worker. I don't think she was here but one year. She was from Geneva. She and George were married soon after she left Elba. I recently had a nice afternoon visit in her Union Springs home that she and George built.

George Andrews was instrumental in getting Camp Rucker converted into permanent Fort Rucker. I believe that took place in 1953 or maybe 1955. That is why streets and boulevards in Ozark, Enterprise, and Fort Rucker are named for him.

Lawrence "Snag" Andrews, his brother, was an Alabama State Senator. He also served to help in re-election efforts. "Snag" died of cancer.

George was always willing, capable and anxious to serve his constituents in all of their requests to his office. Eva Hammond, an Elba native, was a loyal and capable staff member for many years.

I was deeply saddened on Christmas Day, December 25, 1971 that George had died at the age of 65. I went to Whitman Drug Store on Monday morning where they had Western Union. Telegrams were still being used at that time. I wired Mrs. George Andrews, "Our Nation has lost a stout defender. Our District has lost its chief advocate and I have lost a dear friend." Former Governor Big Jim Folsom was at the old Folsom house visiting Thelma Folsom Clark. I called him and told him. He said, "I want to go with you to the funeral." I picked him up and on the way he told me that when he was Governor and wanted something done in Washington, he learned that George was the one he could depend on to accomplish it.

I was standing on the front lawn of the Andrews home talking to Winton "Red" Blount, Bill Dickinson and Ed Danley. Ed Danley had bought a newspaper in Andalusia, but he had been one of George's first high-up staff members. Ed heard me talking to Bill Dickinson. The District had been changed and I knew Bill was going to run for Congress. I told Bill that I liked the way he talked and since George was gone I would support him. Ed Danley got me off to the side and said, "Jake, didn't you know he is a Republican?" I told Ed I had ceased to vote along party lines and voted for the person themselves.

By Governor Folsom and I being together meant we got to sit in the church for the services while multitudes were not able to do so.

I don't believe I ever talked to Bill Dickinson after that day.

I was very fortunate to have had Big Jim Folsom and George Andrews among my friends.

Remembering

With Jake

by Jake Bonneau



I am not sure why this section of Alabama was so much slower to go to mechanized farming, unless we were poorer.

When WWII came about nearly everyone still used mules. I have even seen young children using sticks, about the size of a broom handle, to knock down corn stalks. They could not even afford to buy a mule drawn stalk cutter. Of course, during WWII there were many things that were no longer made even if people could afford to buy. This meant that we were stuck with small farms that one family could operate and make barely enough to subsist. By todays standards there were lots of families that were living below the poverty level. This was not really a problem. They got by and there were so many in the same boat that nothing was thought about it.

The entire family worked on the farm. They worked from early til late. Lots of children went to school part of the time. Saturday was a day to take time off and maybe go to town. In the 1930's the town would be filled with mules and wagons. We had several watering troughs around. The ones I recall were cast iron, about 18" across and 6 feet long with a rounded bottom. A water faucet was on one end to fill it as the mules drank it dry. The Courthouse Square had mules and wagons pulled up and they literally covered about all of it. Of course, in that time there was no inside drives, it was sod all the way around and the massive oak trees on three sides gave shade when it was hot. I might add that Elba had thousands of English sparrows. The mule droppings all over the streets and square gave them a feast.

We had several men who bought, sold, and traded mules. I will try to get that later. Very few people had riding horses or buggy horses. That was a luxury, and few could afford some thing that didn't make them some money.

When I recall the houses of the 1930's it is hard to believe that people lived that way. Plenty are alive today and grew up in those unpainted, board and batten, two or three room places. They were for the most part unsealed and the floors were not even tongue and groove. When the floor boards shrunk there were cracks between each board. Of

course, there was no electricity or running water. The toilet was an outhouse and most often not even over a dug pit, but just left open about 18" up in the back.

While I am at this, I want to inject a little levity. There were lots of times that I would not have told this in mixed company. Times have changed. Right here in Elba we had outhouses as I described. John Garrett, Jr. has repeated this to me many times while laughingly teary eyed. Joe Jernigan, Jr. and John were boyhood friends. The Jernigans lived over in New Town. Althea Jernigan and her girl friend went to the outhouse. Joe and John saw them going and decided to scare them. The girls tied the calico string from one nail to the other to close the door. John and Joe went behind the outhouse and proceeded to scare the young girls. Those girls broke the string and fell down with their bloomers around their ankles. They recovered in a hurry when they heard Joe and John laughing. Althea grabbed Joe by the arm and got the gall berry brush broom with her other hand and wore it out on him. She could not catch John.

Back to life in those hard times. Most families had a dug out water well. They dug a square hole about 4 feet square until they got deep enough to hit firm clay or dirt that would not cave in. You went until you struck enough water to fill the lower part of the well. Several people were employed as "well diggers". They knew how to do it. One person that comes to mind was Rance Stoudemire, a man of color that did the job up into his elderly years. Usually a wood frame work was built around and a frame of heavy wood up above and across to hold the tackle (this was a cast iron wheel with an axle with sides going to an eye on top to attach to the wood). The rope went through the tackle and a bucket was attached to be lowered into the water. When the bucket filled it was pulled back up. This was done for bathing, cooking, washing clothes, drinking water and even watering the stock. Some of the well-to-do had terra cotta side walls and had chain instead of rope. Also some erected a round device with a crank handle to wind the rope or chain around. This made it go up and

down with much less man or, more probably, woman power.

Plowing with the mule involved using a middle buster to break up the land. This, as implied, turned the dirt to both sides. The turn plow just turned it to one side and made furrows. They usually used Vulcan or Oliver steel beam plows. This meant the beams that held the replaceable points, slides, and the curved blade that turned the dirt over. #6 or #7 were for one horse plows, #11 or #13 were two horse plows-Georgia

racket stocks were wooden except the metal that ran down to the ground that held the sweeps. They were wing-like with a square hole in the middle that was to have a square headed bolt to hold it in place. These were usually carried to a blacksmith to temper, set the angle, and sharpen. These went to a shallow depth and kept the weeds and grass cut off.

With the mechanized farming and one man able to do the work of several families, we have seen the gradual demise of those squalid days of yesteryear. Life is much easier. Many of the older people living in Elba today will read this and think, "How does he know this is how I grew up?" I was born and reared into a caring family. We had a hardware store and sold all kinds of farm hardware. People would ask me what they needed to use. I never plowed a furrow row in my life, but I had to know how it was done and how people lived.

You rarely see any of the sharecropper houses. Most of the country homes are brick veneer. Of course, there are not many that make their living on the farm either.

Remembering With Jake

by Jake Bonneau



The first moving motion picture show that ever was in Elba was probably in the early 1920's. It was owned by Dabner Patrick and located on the corner of Davis and Claxton, where Dale Moseley Photographer is now. It is difficult to imagine how that building looked at that time.

I know of no other building in Elba that has had more varied uses. I recall when D. H. James brought ice from Enterprise and sold and stored it there. Part of it, at that time, was rental bins for people to keep meat on cold storage. Dozier Bryan and his wife, Gussie, ran an ice cream parlor either in that building or next door. John M. Garrett, Jr. had the Ford Motor Company there. I don't know how many other businesses have been there. I would guess the building itself is very little like the original one.

Movies of that day were black and white with no sound. Writing across the screen had to be read to know what was said. They were often called "flickers" because of the uneven way they moved across the screen. Since there was no sound the owner hired a pianist to play during the picture being shown. A good one knew what to play with different scenes. In large towns they sometimes hired organists. Hattie Mae Bullard played at that picture show. This all was before my memory. The first one I remember was on Court Street on the Square, about where Billy McCollough had his store and where Family Videoz is today. I don't know who owned it but Felix Morrow ran it. He might have owned it. This was late 1920 to early 1930's.

Walter Brackin of Ozark was the ultimate showman. He came to Elba and fixed up the first real picture show. He bought two store buildings, they were 25' each, and erected a real nice show place. It had a stage in front of the large screen. There was a balcony. This was in the days of segregation and blacks had to go to the balcony, but others could if they wanted to do so. This was in the early to mid 1930's. People loved the picture shows. There was no T.V., only radio. Times were difficult for nearly everyone and this was a magical way to escape into a world of dreams for a while.

On Saturday they opened it at 10:00 a.m. It ran all day into the night. Any one under 12 years of age paid 10¢. Many stayed 12 for quite awhile. They might have found enough money for a 10¢ bag of popcorn. It was not unusual for lots of them to spend hours there. Every weekend they ran serials that went on for months. Every episode stopped at some crucial moment so you must come back the next week to see how they survived.

Walter Brackin brought Dozier Roberts here to manage his theatre. The picture show was a vital way of life to all towns. The movies became talkies in early 1930's and color came in the late 1930's. It did not come quite as early to small towns as cities. My Father and Mother took us to Dothan to see Al Jackson in "The Jazz Singer", the first talkie I ever saw. We went to Montgomery's Paramount Theatre to see "Gone With The Wind". I believe that was in 1936. The Paramount was palatial.

Every Sunday, parents would allow their children to go to the afternoon movies. That gave parents a rest. I recall sermons on Sunday being about the sin of not keeping the Sabbath day holy. Going to a movie on Sunday afternoon meant you must repent or be hell-bound. Of course, during that period, the pastor of the Baptist Church played Rook with my Mother and Father, but on Sunday he preached against playing Bridge because it was played with gambling cards.

Dozier Roberts was very civic minded and it was good for business to do things beneficial to the community. He started letting the contest for electing the young lady for the coveted title of Miss Elba be held at the theatre. A pretty curtain could be pulled into place in front of the screen. There was room enough back of the screen to hold many people. Steps went up to the stage from either front aisle. All in all it was a very attractive setting. The Miss Elba contest was held there for a number of years. It was one of Elba's social events of the year.

I want to interject a thought here. People did not buy new seed for the next year's planting. They saved the best peanuts, cotton seed, corn, okra, etc., so they could have the best chance of making a good crop.

The picture show, including the balcony, would be full on that big social event. I'll never forget the night that Louie Gwen Dismukes was selected as Miss Elba. Just two years before, her sister, Totsye, had won the honor. The father of these young beauties was Louie J. Dismukes, and he was justifiably proud. Not many had only one daughter as Miss Elba and this was his second. He went to the front lobby to stand and receive the accolades that he knew would be coming. I was standing nearby when Kermit Crook shook his hand and said, "Louie, I'll never believe in seed corn again." That did not faze Louie in the least. He kept on grinning and shaking hands.

After WWII, Walter Brackin bought an Elba landmark on the north side of the Square. He tore down the old, unpainted, tin topped, one long wooden step up into, heart pine building that Ran McCollough and Luther Morris had begun doing business in in 1929. I will get to that entire story later, I trust and pray.

Walter Brackin decided Elba needed another smaller second picture show. I don't believe that was in business over a couple of years. It is the building between the Joe Young, Levy Foley Barber Shop and the Jewel Box. If you look up at the front of those buildings you will see that it is several feet taller than the others. That was to accommodate the projection room. It has been a long time since Elba had a picture show. T.V., everyone with good transportation, and changing life styles have changed small town life. For bad or for good, who knows?

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WINTON M BLOUNT
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

March 10, 1994

Mr. John J. Bonneau
479 North Claxton Avenue
Elba, AL 36323

Dear Jake:

Thank you for sending me your article in the February 17 issue of the Elba Clipper. It brought back many wonderful memories for me. I remember the election of George Andrews in 1944 very well. My father told me a lot of stories about it.

I was in the Army Air Corp at the time of my father's death only three months after the election. In going through his papers after the funeral I came across a letter from Hubert Baughn, who I'm sure you remember was a great political commentator at the time. It was a one sentence letter and I quote, "Dear Bo, Congratulations on giving them a barbed wire enema."

George used to tell the story about the election which he heard about while stationed at Pearl Harbor. The radio was the only communication they had. The election results came in slowly and each time they quoted Mr. Blount who said, "Lieutenant Andrews won by 3000 votes." The next broadcast, "Lieutenant Andrews won by 2000 votes" and so on until finally Mr. Blount announced that Lieutenant Andrews won by 300 votes. George said his fellow Naval officers said that if Mr. Blount hadn't stopped talking and they hadn't stopped counting he never would have been elected to Congress.

Fortunately George was still in office when I went to Washington in 1969 to be in President Nixon's cabinet. He was an enormous help to me and I used to talk to him a lot about the political stories of Alabama.

Thanks for the memories.

With warm regards, I am,

Sincerely,

Ned

Remembering With Jake

by Jake Bonneau



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Several people have suggested that I tell something about my mother's family. I would not dare bore you with a lot of genealogical facts. I do believe I can tell a very interesting story about life, and how they dealt with it, more than one hundred years ago.

My grandmother was born Maria Louise Garrison on February 21, 1844 in Greenville, South Carolina. She was named for Napoleon Bonaparte's second wife and the mother of his child.

She married a Dr. Collins from Perry County, Alabama. I would think that he got his M.D. degree in South Carolina. They came to Lowndes County, Alabama for his practice of medicine. I would think this was in the early 1870's. They were able to secure lodging in the John Till home. They lived there a couple of years. Lowndes, before the War Between the States, had been the financial and cultural center of Alabama. He was taken sick and died at the Till home. I am sure that she, like all young widows, in her grief felt that he must be buried with her Garrison family in Greenville, SC. There were no embalmers available. The body had to be taken from Macedonia, another always called it the Dutch Bend Community, by wagon to the nearest railroad which was Greenville in Butler County. From there began the long trip to Greenville, SC.

They knew that the body would decompose in that long length of time. This next is what I consider the ingenuity of people that find a way to do the seemingly impossible.

The body was placed in the casket, which was probably made on the plantation. The shipping box was, of course, much larger for the casket to go into. The bottom of it was lined with several inches of charcoal. The casket was placed on top with the sides and top filled with charcoal. The top of the shipping box was then secured. This enabled the entire structure to be buried intact with the charcoal absorbing all odor. I was always intrigued by the way they somehow found a way to do what needed to be done.

She was to accompany the body and there was no way to transfer money in those days. She had servants to sew \$1,000 in gold into a bustle that she could wear safely on the train ride to South Carolina.

Now begins the next episode of this romantic saga. Mrs. Collins, now the Widow Collins, asked Jacob

Granville Till, son of John and Martha Arant Till, to please see if he could collect some of the money owed to Dr. Collins. He said he would gladly help. She turned Dr. Collins ledger over to him. When he collected enough to make it worth while, he would take the train from Greenville, AL to Greenville, SC and carry it to her.

He had fallen in love with her when they were living in Lowndes County, but he couldn't say so. Now he was doing long distance courting. After several trips, Jacob Granville Till asked Maria Louise Garrison (she had no children and dropped the Collins) to marry him. She said, "Jake, I am nine years older than you. Don't you think that is too much difference?" He told her that it made absolutely no difference and if she would marry him, her age would never be mentioned. They were married in Greenville, SC and came by train to Butler County, AL. This must have been in about 1879. The 1990 flood destroyed so many of my records.

Their first child, Iola Corinne Till, was born in 1881. They moved to Greenville, AL where my mother, Mamie Garrison Till, was born November 16, 1884. They were living in a real nice house on Fort Dale. Soon after that, my grandfather bought a large house about two blocks nearer town. It was a large, very comfortable home. It was at least 20 to 25 years old when he bought it. That house on Fort Dale was never meant to be a Southern mansion, just a huge comfortable home.

In that day and time the parents bedroom was the "family room". I measured that room one time just to see how large it was. It was 20 x 30' and had a bay window where you could see both ways on the main street. The dining room was 16 x 20'. There were smaller rooms for special purposes such as a serving room, and a music room for the piano. That house has been made into 5 large apartments and is still in use. It is at least 125 years old.

My grandfather told Maria Louise Garrison that if she would marry him he would never mention her age. My mother told me that on many occasions he would enter the house with a box of candy or a bunch of flowers to present his wife for no reason, except that he adored her. Never in his life did anyone in that house celebrate or say a word about her birthday.

Remembering With Jake

by Jake Bonneau

Before our modern day dependence upon the automobile, people who only had a couple of miles or so to go never considered going to the trouble to hitch up mules or horses to a wagon or buggy. They used what in those days were called "Shank's Mares"; meaning they walked. I assume that some man named Shank called his legs that.

Jacob Granville Till's home was not but about 1 block from the railroad so he walked there and down the track southward about 1/2 mile to his cotton warehouse. I never knew whether he built it or bought it. It is still there. This building is just south of the Railroad Depot building. It is about 75 feet wide and 300 feet long. It was built near enough to the railroad that two large sliding doors from the warehouse lead out to heavy wooden platforms that went out as close to the railroad boxcars as possible. A metal piece strong and wide enough to carry a pair of hand trucks loaded with a 500 pound bale of cotton could be rolled from the warehouse and loaded until you had a boxcar full of cotton. Greenville was one of the fortunate towns located on the "Main Line". That was the only means of long distance transportation in mass form. The trains went from up North down through Nashville, Tennessee, a major railroad city; Birmingham, Montgomery, Greenville, and the best of all for cotton, it went to the seaport cities of Mobile and New Orleans. Much of our cotton was sold to European markets.

Jake Till had a bird dog named Max that went with him everyday from his home to the warehouse. In the fall of the year, he would take his double barrel shotgun and he and Max would walk down the tracks and shoot enough quail for supper.

I would think that Jake Till started that business in about 1886. I have always been intrigued by a smart business move he made. On the south end of the warehouse, he had a two story section built. It is about 20 feet wide with a brick wall in the center extending about 4 feet from each wall. In the middle are double fireplaces, downstairs and upstairs. An inside water well was dug into the clay. It was walled inside with brick. The reason for this I will explain.

Greenville has a very large trading area and being on the railroad

made it more attractive. Cotton was the big crop in that entire area for many, many years. The more cotton my grandfather handled, the more money he made. In this two story section he furnished the downstairs with cast iron pots, kettles, frying pans, etc. He also furnished folding canvas stools to sit on. Upstairs he furnished canvas cots for sleeping. There were two doors, one on each side looking toward the street below. There was the mule lot and places for wagons. People came to town when necessary. When they brought their cotton in they would pay their taxes; buy what they had to have, transact all the business while they were in town. Many brought their own meat and meal. Jake Till furnished them a place to live for the few days they were in town. I have often thought he had the "Green Stamps" of his day. He was of Dutch descent and was worthy of his lineage.

They had that large house on Fort Dale and Oak and my mother said someone was nearly always visiting. There are many Tills and they felt welcome.

My paternal grandfather, Dr. William Henry Bonneau III was born in Lowndes County. When my father, John Moorer Bonneau, traveled by horse and buggy from Elba to visit relatives and friends in Lowndes they would stay overnight with the Jake Till family. This is how my mother and father first met.

Dr. Bonneau's mother was Olivia Moorer Bonneau. His grandparents were John Jacob Moorer who married Leah Rumph. I feel sure that is who they visited.

My father married an Elba girl in November of 1905 so Dr. Bonneau made the trip alone. Mother told me that his legs and feet were swollen so she heated water for the wash pan and massaged his feet. He told her how much it helped his feet. Of course we know today that he had congestive heart failure. In that day and time it was called heart dropsy.

The last time he visited he spent the night at the Till home and continued to Lowndes. He came back in a few days on his way back to Elba. He told Jacob Granville Till, "Jake, I am not able to make the trip back by horse and buggy. Please sell my rig and send me the money. I will take the train home." He died in 1912. I will finish next week.

THE ELBA CLIPPER

MARCH 24, 1994

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WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau

THE ELBA CLIPPER

MARCH 31, 1994



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It was apparent that the Till family went by train back to Greenville, South Carolina. Aunt Corinne spent much of her time visiting there. Maria Louise Garrison Till's mother was a Watson. Aunt Corinne spoke of a relative she called Ordinary John. For years I thought he was just an ordinary average person. She explained to me that in South Carolina it was Probate Judge. The Watson family had a family reunion every year. She got me interested and I have been to a number of them over the years.

John Watson, born in 1752 and died in 1823, was a Revolutionary soldier. His grave is marked with a DAR marker. It is located in a rural cemetery between Greenville and Spartanburg.

I had the Watson family book that lists my sister, Corinne Bonneau English, her daughter, Margaret Bonneau English Jones, and myself. Thank God I gave it to my granddaughter, Melissa, prior to the March 1990 flood.

Iola Corinne Till married Lander Cureton of Greenville, SC on January 21, 1903. They moved into the Till home in Alabama. They had one child, Jacob Lander Cureton, who was born on June 1, 1911. Lander Cureton died at the Till home on June 12, 1926. He was only 46 years old.

Aunt Corinne was rather tall, with high cheek bones, and a Roman nose. She was very beautiful and talented. She played the piano and sang well. She painted with oil and pastels. I had a charcoal drawing of the Saluda River by moonlight that she did while visiting in South Carolina. Unfortunately, the 1990 flood got that too.

My father had married Bessie Bryan of Elba. They had a son, Charles Rudolph Bonneau, who was born on September 29, 1907, and a daughter, Hazel Bonneau, who was born on January 20, 1910. Bessie died of a ruptured appendix on December 10, 1910. Hazel was less

than a year old. As time went on, my father inquired and found that Mamie Garrison Till had not married. They had known each other since they were children. He started his courtship and she agreed to marry him. My grandfather, Jake Till, had Dr. L.L. Gwaltney, head of the Alabama Baptists, to come to the Till home to perform the wedding ceremony. They were married on October 16, 1917. They took the train to Montgomery where they spent the night. The next day, they came down to Waterford where they changed trains and came to Elba.

My grandfather had only the two girls and he saw to it that they had whatever it took to make life good for them. He had managed his own affairs well and made a lot of money. He owned a chain drive Buick automobile when my mother married. He came to Elba in 1918 for a short visit. Being a businessman he knew that my father needed to do business in Elba. He gave him money to buy a Ford Model T from Pete Dorsey. He recognized the business ability of my dad and furnished the money to put him into his own business. It was a good investment. My father was an excellent businessman. I was born on December 12, 1919 and mother was expecting another child in May of 1922. My grandfather told my parents to build a new house and he would pay for it. We moved into that home in August of 1922.

Aunt Corinne and son, Lander, were visiting us when the March 14, 1929 flood occurred. Forty-nine people and two dogs rode that out in the loft of the Wiley Bullard house. Corinne and I stayed with them in Greenville until dad and mother could get us back into our home.

Jacob Lander Cureton had married Marguerite Franklin and they had a daughter, Margaret, born in March of 1941. Lander was a captain of a heavy ordinance company during the "Battle of the Bulge". He and all of them were fighting for their lives. After 72 hours of not even sitting down, he had a heart attack. He finally got back home. He had a son, Jacob Lander Cureton, Jr. Lander kept having heart attacks and on June 9, 1951, he died. Just a few days past his 40th birthday.

Jacob Granville Till became ill and the doctors of that day told him he had cancer of the liver. They had no way to treat it. His only concern was leaving his beloved wife. He died July 22, 1923. Maria Louise Garrison Till died June 19, 1925. She was nine years older than he, but

out lived him by two years.

Aunt Corinne would not remarry until Jacob Lander was grown. He attended Clemson College in South Carolina. She even rented an apartment and stayed up there a good bit. She married Casper West. She had known him since their youth. She was a real character. She laughingly said she was engaged to three men at one time and did not marry any one of them. She and Casper West were happy. They went to the Gulf Coast in April and May, and then went to Greenville, AL to get ready to go to the Carolina mountains until Labor Day. He died in the late 1930's. My mother went with her sister by train back to Greenville, SC for interment.

It was so sad to see this vivacious and talented lady acquire Alzheimer's disease and not even know who she was. She died April 20, 1961. The Till and Cureton families are interred in Magnolia Cemetery.

Aunt Corinne was left the Till home that she had lived in since a child. My mother inherited the Till cotton warehouse. The money was divided between the two. Over the years, mother got some of the many beautiful antiques, but most were left in the Till home. About two years after Aunt Corinne's death, I went to Greenville. All the outside doors were open. I was amazed at the furniture that was still there. My grandmother's rosewood armoire with the hand carved pediment across the top and the two bevel glass doors. Next to it on the sun parlor was grandfather's walnut armoire with curved top and bottom and no glass. I later found out that someone got much of what was there. Jacob Lander Cureton, Jr., had the walnut repaired where someone tried to take it apart and could not. He got my grandfather's plantation desk which is very rare.

I recently went to Greenville and was glad to see the old home has been kept up in good shape. There are five apartments and the original carriage house, that was later made into a car garage, has been made into a small attractive apartment on Oak Street.

My mother sold the Till cotton warehouses years ago. I have no idea who owns the old Till house.

Greenville is very lucky. It grew up on the Main Line when the railroad was king. Now it is on Interstate #65 and that is now king of the road.

REMEMBERING WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau

ELBA CLIPPER

APRIL



In the summer of 1947 I was coming back from the Florida coast with Ross and Thelma Clark. I don't know if I went down there with them. I think not. It was not unusual for Elba people to go and come with others. It had been raining a lot and when we neared the Alabama state line, below Samson, you ran out of black top road, and about a mile from Pea River the road was 5 or 6 feet lower. There was a steel truss bridge with a wooden floor across the river. It was the same height as the black top road on the Florida side. Thelma was driving, I never saw Ross drive when she was in the car. Water was running across the unpaved road to the bridge. Thelma stopped and we discussed what to do. It was a long way to find another route around. I was in the back seat of the 4-door car. I told them I would pull my shoes and socks off, roll my pants up, and get a long stick to probe in front of me to keep from getting into a deep hole, and Thelma would follow me as I walked. It came up to my pants, but with careful driving we made it up to the bridge and on home. There was another bridge like that over the Pea River near Geneva. They were probably built in the late 1800's, when there were no automobiles.

James E. "Big Jim" Folsom had taken office as Governor of the State of Alabama in January of 1947. He astounded the political pros by being elected without their help. The Governor of Alabama has more authority than in many of the states. He has more leeway to get things done without interference. At that time, the Governor appointed one full Colonel and 20 Lt. Colonels to be on his staff. It was done through the State Militia. Gen. Saliba and Gov. Folsom both signed my Lt. Col. status. After that administration, it was done as a political ploy only and they were handed out wholesale and meant nothing.

In the fall of 1947, the Governor's Military Ball was held in Montgomery. The old city auditorium was

right in the center of downtown. All of the big events were held there for lack of other facilities. The Governor's Mansion was in an old home nearer downtown. I believe it was the old Sabel home. It was torn down when I-85 came through. At any rate, Gov. Folsom had gotten come as guest of honor for the Military Ball. I recall seeing him sitting and watching the dancing from an elevated box and I could not resist going to talk to him. After all, the U.S. never had but a few five star generals and he was one of that select handful. He was a most gracious gentleman. Someone asked me what we talked about and I said, "Anything but military affairs. You do not do that with a five star general."

After the ball, a few of us went to the Mansion for a late night snack, or early breakfast. J.P. Faulk and his wife, Marie, were friends of the Governor. They were from Samson. J.P., the Governor, and I were around the breakfast room table talking. I told the Governor the story about his sister, Thelma, and brother-in-law, Ross, and myself, and our

Pea River episode. Of course, when I suggested that Alabama sorely needed to upgrade the road and bridge into Alabama, J.P. heartily agreed and elaborated on it. I don't recall how fast that project was accomplished, but it was done during that Folsom Administration. Whenever I go or come from Florida and cross that high, wide concrete bridge and the road built up high so that even the flood of 1990 did not cover the bridge or road, I can't help but think of that night after the Ball and the almost casual way it came about in conversation. Many people do not realize that often that is the way government works.

J.P. Faulk went on to be elected Probate Judge of Geneva County. He served several terms and was never defeated. He finally retired and moved to Florida where he could be near the best fishing. He died a few years ago. I don't know what happened to Marie. When I look back over the last number of years and think of all the people I was once close to and we gradually drifted apart and lose contact with each other. Our memories are still strong, but that is just a part of life and death..

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Apr 20 1994

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REMEMBERING THE ELBA CLIPPER

WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau

MAY 5, 1994



I am sure that what we call "country stores" evolved many, many years ago. There was a need and someone saw it and supplied that.

In this area, I remember that there was one every few miles in nearly every direction. In the 1920's there was little motorized transportation, so many walked to the nearest store to get the necessary items for everyday living. Canned goods were the main items stocked. Tobacco was also much in demand. Kerosene was a necessity. It was used in lamps and lanterns to give the only light available after dark. It was a common practice to fill the 1 gallon can with kerosene and nearly always the small cup on the spout was lost so an Irish potato was stuck into it to keep the oil from sloshing out. Potatoes kept well so they were available. The country store was a central meeting place where people got the news of what was going on. Many times they were the voting place for that beat. The owner was the person who ran the store and that made him a leader of the community. He and, in rare cases, she extended credit to worthy customers.

I will try to name some of the ones I remember. These are from early days. At Danley's Crossroads

on the southeast corner in a wooden building next to his house J. W. "Button" Grimes had his store. It was a well known fixture of its day. He did a large business and was a powerful leader of the community. Voting took place in his store and all politicians tried to get him on their side. Only two or three miles north at Pine Level was the Os Cooper store and about the same distance south was Horace Donaldson's store at Curtis. You must remember that in those days, a little money went a long way. There were a number of small stores that were only 8 feet x 10 feet and next to the owner's house. They were only opened up when someone called them to the door to let them buy some of the small list of items available. Crackers came in a barrel and were put into a sack after you told them how many you wanted. Cucumber pickles also were in a barrel. These were only available in the larger stores. Also the larger stores had ice boxes with soft drinks. No cans, just glass bottles. The ice truck came every few days to renew the ice. A spigot came out the bottom so the melted water was carried outside and emptied from the bucket used for that purpose. Roy Barlow has had a store at Basin, and still does, as long as I can recall.

Up the Troy road was a large store operated by Frank Price. That was this side of Zion Chapel. On the New Brockton road, the nearest one to town was John Bradshaw. He operated it until he was killed in an automobile accident. It never went well after that. J. P. McCall had one on the left about 4 miles out. Leon Roberts had another near Brockton.

One of the largest and most profitable ones was run by Jimmy George Wise way down the Samson road past Damascus. Another large country store is at Damascus. It has been there since before 1890. It was first owned by a farmers association.

Gus Stephens bought it from Marion and Andrew Morrow in 1917. Upon his death, his son, Robert Stephens, ran it from 1946 until January of 1991. Robert farmed and sold a lot of fresh produce from his store. Many people stocked their freezers every year with his production. It has changed hands at least twice since he left. It is located directly across the road from the old Stephens home.

There was another store across from the Johnny Wise home on the Victoria road. I believe Mr. Wise ran it. Of course there were two stores at Victoria at the crossroads. One I remember was run by Bill Thomas.

There were a number of small places. I recall Ed Taylor had one in the city limits on Opp road. R. C. Grantham had a large one on out the Opp road. Walter and Bertie Mock had one down the Samson road. People stopped there to be entertained by Bertie Mock. She was a real character.

All of these stores sold sugar, canned goods, snuff, tobacco, and there was only about 3 or 4 kinds of ready rolled cigarettes. Of course, salt was a big seller. Everyone used it to preserve meats. Coffee was a must. Much of it was sold as green beans. It was placed into a baking pan and roasted in the oven. It had to be done just right to be good. Then it was placed in a coffee grinder to be ground up for boiling. Most of the coffee was boiled and then strained or let it settle before it was poured. A few grounds were part of drinking good, strong coffee. The aroma was smelled outdoors.

I am sure that I have left out stores that others remember, but this give an idea of what it was like in those by gone days. It was not much different when you lived in town. There were no super markets. Each store, more or less, had a specialty that made it different. I will try to cover the early stores of Elba in another column.

REMEMBERING WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau

There was not much difference in country stores and stores in town during the 1920's and 1930's. None of them carried fresh meat and seldom any fresh vegetables.

People from the country that grew excess vegetables would load their wagons, or later the Model T, up and bring them to town. All of the housewives had doors and windows open in the growing season so they knew who was bringing produce by. Nearly every family in town had a milk cow and a garden. The men sold lots of what they didn't need to eager women that could buy what was ready to use.

The earliest store that I recall was Smith Bros. over by the railroad in New Town. Mother would go into the hall of our house and on the wall was an oak wood case that held the telephone. There was a ringer on the right side, a mouth piece jutted out several inches on a swivel that allowed a short person to pull it down and a tall person to push it up. On the left was the receiver with a long cord that allowed you to place it to the ear. You twisted the ringer and the two bells at the top of the case sounded loud and clear. The operator asked you what number you wanted. If you did not know the number you just told her the name and she rang it. Mother had a list made of what was needed and she told them. In a very short time a boy on a bicycle pulled up at the back door and brought the order into the kitchen. I remember Mother was complimentary of a young man named Dewey Tucker that brought her order and was so nice and courteous.

Smith Bros. was probably started in the mid 1920's by Drayton and Claude Smith. Drayton married Ethel Farris and Claude married Glennie Rowe. Neither had children. There were several other stores very similar. Most did not deliver like the Smiths. One that I recall was on Putnam on the bank of the Beaver Dam Creek. The creek came through Elba at that time. It was owned by the Wiley Blair's. Mr. Blair traveled for Henderson-Black and Green out of Troy. His wife, Effie, and Mrs. R. L. Martin ran the store. Mrs. Martin was Erma Curenton before her marriage. Mr. Martin was Robert Lounie Martin and he traveled for Nathan

Segal out of Montgomery. Vennie Blair was the wife of Frank Blair and she hung out there and helped when needed. It is hard to believe that those small stores were able to do a good deal of business for that day and time. It was that everyone traded close to where they lived. Nearly everyone walked.

Mrs. Martin wanted her own store and the chance came after the March 1929 flood. Drayton and Claude Smith decided to move to the Court-house Square and rented their building to the Martins. Mr. Martin continued to travel and Erma ran the business. She put in a few dry goods, such as overalls. By the fall of 1930 Drayton Smith informed the Martins he had to have his building back. He was not doing well in town. The Martins rented a building from Gus Owen and moved to where Elba Florist is now located. Levie Hammond moved them with a one horse wagon in the fall of 1930. The Martins later moved to the corner of Court and Simmons, where it is today, under different owners. The only retail business that I know of that is older is Duke Tatum on Court. He started that in about 1926. His son now owns it. The Martins got out of the grocery part in 1941 and went to all dry goods.

There were several grocery stores in sections of Elba. Somewhat like the country stores. They each had their own customers. Coston Morrow had one on Claxton. It was first started by Miss Maggie Butts and her mother. It burned in about 1970. One of the most unique was Morris-McCollough on the Square. It was in an old wooden building on the north side of the Square, next to the Jewel Box. I believe it was originally one of Elba's salons. Ran McCollough and Luther Morris were brothers-in-law and they established a thriving business. You had to step up one step to get into the building. It had a plain wooden floor. Many times there would be a wood hamper of

salt fish, with a cheese cloth net over it to keep the flies out, sitting on the sidewalk near the front door. Salt fish were a Sunday morning delicacy. They had to be placed in cold water and soaked overnight to get lots of the salt out. They were washed good, battered and fried. It was something different from the usual bacon, ham or sausage with eggs; and of course the hot biscuits and grits were a must. With the fish you had fried cornbread. Morris-McCollough did not have cash registers. Ran and Luther made change from their pockets they were also well known to let their customers run up credit. I am sure they had to charge more than some to cover losses. I'll try to tell about fresh meat markets and the first supermarkets next time.



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MAY 19, 1994

When ice became available to this area, it made it possible for people to buy fresh meat. Several people took advantage of this opportunity to make money.

From what I can learn, among the first to handle fresh meat, along with the groceries, was Ernest Harper. He had a business on Davis in the Page buildings. Meat was cut into the proper pieces and placed on chipped ice in glass cases for the customers to see and select what they wanted.

Dan Prescott had the first meat market that I ever knew. Of course he started it before I was born. It began in about 1910 on the corner of Davis and Court. He later moved to a portion of the building on the corner of Court and Simmons, Martin's is there now. He had about 15 feet x 25 feet. His next move was in 1924 to about where the Jewel Box is today. That was where I remember Prescott's Meat Market existing. It was there until it closed in 1945. They also bought some smoked bacon and ham from local farmers and resold it to their customers. Mr. Prescott bought cattle and hogs and had them slaughtered for his own meat market. There was no regulations on how and where this could be done. Elba was a small town and the nearest and best place for this was where the old middle school and the football stadium is now left standing. This was woods and a swampy area at that time. The meat was cut in large pieces and carried to the market to be cut into the desired cuts. Many of the bones were left on the ground for the varmits and buzzards to pick clean. When I was growing up, and got big enough to ramble around with my friends, we found this area with all of the bleached white bones, and everyone started calling it the "Bone Yard". Mr. Dan Prescott had two sons that always helped him in the business and they continued in the meat business. They were Cecil and Joe Frank. Dan Fred, who was younger, as far as I recall, never did anything in that line. Cecil is buried in the family lot at Evergreen. Joe Frank lives in Elba. Dan Fred retired and lives in Montgomery. Another meat market of this era was over in New Town. It was owned and operated by F. D. Veal and I do recall his son Jack. I never went there but am sure it was similar to Prescott's. By the way, both of them would have calls on the telephone and the order would be delivered to the home. People were anxious for business and would go to any length to get it. In the 1930's electric refrigeration came into use

and that meant grocery stores that had never handled fresh meat could get into the business.

Fred Taylor started the Jitney-Jungle on the south side of the Square. As far as I can ascertain that was the first chain store in Elba. This was probably early 1940's or late 1930's. Jordan Lindsey also had a store on that side of the Square. All of them had meat departments. Fred Taylor sold his Jitney-Jungle to Mr. Head. By the way, Jordan and his wife, Gussie Mae, had an excellent cafe later on in the late 1940-50's on the corner of Factory and Simmons. This was in the building built jointly by the City of Elba and the Masonic Lodge. The Masonic Lodge #176 was upstairs. The cafe occupied at least one-half of the downstairs with large plate glass on the street sides. The other half of that building was the City Hall, the Elba Police Department and the rear of the same building, facing Factory Street was the Fire Department. After the cafe closed it became the City Hall with the Library in the rear. Now the City Hall occupies a small block. The Fire Department across the end of a block and a large two story building houses the Police Department. May I ask a question, "With exception of the library, how better off are we?"

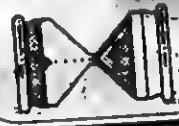
Back to the old stores. The first Piggly Wiggly had its grand opening recorded by *The Elba Clipper* on October 13, 1949. It was owned by John Taylor and his son, Haywood. It was closer to a complete store than anything we had up until that time. It was located where the present Western Auto is located, on the corner of Buford and Court.

The first true supermarket in Elba came when Chapman and Benson of Geneva bought the Piggly Wiggly in Elba to add to their chain. They then bought the old Baptist pastorium lot, along with the adjacent garden spot, on Claxton. They bought the Dr. Alder property on Buford and with all this there was enough land to build a large store building and have Elba's first customer parking lot. Before that it was only to find a spot on the street, if you could. What a good move that was. That was in the year 1957 when it opened. It was at the intersection of Brundidge Road, Troy and Brantley Road and one block from Opp Road coming into Elba. That space is now occupied by Peoples Bank of Elba. There is no Piggly Wiggly. Like so many times, a bad decision was made to move. It did not work.

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**THE ELBA CLIPPER
REMEMBERING
With Jake** by Jake Bonneau

MAY 19, 1994



In the early 1930s there was a great financial burden on every man who was trying to make a living for his family.

Ben Conner found a lot next to the old bank building on Davis. Nothing had ever been built there. It was owned by the spinster sisters, Mae and Lilian Morris. Both were school teachers. He arranged to build a wooden frame structure there. It was covered with tin roofing. Roof, sides and all. It sat a few feet back from the sidewalk. A wood walkway went from the paved sidewalk slightly up to meet the wood floor in the door to go in the front and one to go out the back. The building was 25 feet wide and probably 15 feet deep. A wooden counter went across, with enough room to walk back of, and homemade stools were for customers to sit up to the counter.

Ben was a very affable man and everyone thought well of him. His full name was Benjamin Franklin Conner, Jr., but I never heard anyone speak of him as anything but Ben.

In the back was an area about 25 feet x 50 feet that had a number of unusual trees. They had two or three 6" branches near the ground, about 10' to 12' tall, with large leaves near the top. They made a nice shade. The ground looked like it had been hoed and swept. It may have been.

On many Saturday afternoons, Irvin L. Johnson and brother, Lee, would make music with guitar and fiddle while people gathered to listen and some danced.

We called it an "Oyster Bar". He served, in season, oysters on the half shell and oyster stew. He served year round hamburgers and hot dogs. He made a special sauce to use on raw oysters. It had catsup, vinegar, horse radish and he would never tell what else. It was very good. He placed it in empty catsup bottles that had a cork stopper with a "V" groove cut into it to shake out on the oyster. It was very tasty. Another thing that he was famous for was his oyster stew. Again, everyone made oyster stew, but Ben had the best anyone ever ate. That was another secret.

His hotdogs and hamburgers were also outstanding. He told me that no one could make a real good hamburger with pure beef. You needed a little dry bread crumbs so it would hold the moisture. When you were anywhere near his place the aroma coming from the food being prepared made you hungry. He had a son named Harold that helped him. Harold was rather short and squarely built. Ben was heartily hefty and jovial. Harold acquired a nickname of "Puny" and it stuck. He was not puny, but with nicknames, that never made any difference.

People came from far and near to eat at Ben Conner's. The food, and it was not a great variety, was excellent and the conversation was stimulating. The price was right. What more could a person want. He also would shuck fresh oysters and sell you a pint or so to go. They came to him on ice and were kept on ice out back in sacks to be brought in as needed.

All of this cooking was done on oil burning stoves, fueled by kerosene.

Elba had a man that everyone called "Chicago". He was not very tall and not very big. He did not get enough to eat to do anything but exist. He never asked anyone for anything, but would do any type work he was capable of doing. He was known as a kind and gentle man. He and his friend by the name of Staley built a dirt floored shack across Pea River up from the old City Pool. It was built of whatever they could find. Pastewood cartons were used when needed. It was located on what is now Brunson Street, along where H.H. "Junior" Culver now lives. In those days when a person died and had no relatives that were known, they had a county burial. It was very meager. He was called "Chicago" for it was said that is where he came from. His name was Irvin Hewitt, I found out. I was in the funeral business and told the agent to go sell him a burial policy and when he did not make the payments to come to me and I would. He died on July 21, 1945. I found out from the policy that he was born November 18, 1877. In those days I had trouble getting people to leave a casket at the funeral home. With him that was no problem.

To show what a caring person Ben Conner was, he came to me a few days later and said, "Chicago doesn't have anything of value except his chickens. What do you think of me selling them and buying him a marker?" I heartily agreed. Ben sold them and Shelby Morrow owned and ran the vault company. They made concrete markers that had the name, dates of birth and death. They were not costly. Ben sold the chickens. Bonneau-Jeter Funeral Home buried him. I had a preacher for the service held at the funeral home, and arranged for flowers. He is buried inside the first entrance to the Evergreen Cemetery, nearest the first entrance on the right. Next to him is buried his friend Staley. Staley's grandson came from Columbus, Georgia and asked me where he was buried. I told him and he has placed a marker on Staley and painted Chicago and Staley both so heavy it is nearly impossible to read.

Virgil J. Elmore, another Coffee County native, bought the lot from the Morris sisters and Ben was out of business. He placed V.J. Elmore 5 & 10 Cent Store there in a nice new building. I recall taking Little Jim and Jack Folsom there, to let them pick out what they wanted, when their father, Gov. Big Jim, was visiting the old Folsom home on Hickman. Little did I ever think Little Jim would be Governor of Alabama also.

As I have said, Ben Conner was a very popular person. He ran for Tax Collector and was elected in 1957. He was doing a good job and was running for re-election when he died on April 2, 1960. He was born in 1894. His wife, Nannie, was born in 1893 and died in 1982. Ben Conner's term had not expired and John

Patterson was governor. He appointed his daughter, Frances Conner, to fill the rest of his term of office. Ben and Nannie's daughter, Majorie, married Mike Taylor. Frances never married. Ben Frank III lives in the Atlanta area. I know that he married Paxton Miles' daughter and had several children. I have lost contact for some time.

THE ELBA CLIPPER MAY 26, 1994

REMEMBERING WITH JAKE By Jake Bonneau

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Mrs. Mae Young called me recently and suggested that I tell something about the old schools. I think it is a great idea.

I will start off with Miss Mae Sowell. She started teaching at a small school below Dothan, near the Florida line, named Providence. A young boy drove an ox cart and brought his two sisters from over in Florida to that school everyday. He, and the girls, not only brought their own sack lunch, but brought, on the cart, feed for the ox. How good it would be if children and parents of today were that anxious to get an education.

Schools of that day were rather like country stores. They had to be close enough for them to go by walking, or rarely, by wagon, or more rarely, by horseback or ox cart.

Some schools were only one room with one teacher. It depended on the density of population in the community as to the number of grades.

Mae Sowell's principal was asked to come from her 1-6 grade school to Curtis School in Coffee County. He told the Board of Trustees he wanted to bring Mae Sowell with him as a teacher. They agreed and Mac Sowell started teaching in the fall of 1925. She met Grafton Young and they were married in 1927.

I will try to tell about several schools of different sizes and somewhat of the way they were operated. There was a local school board for each school. They were the men near the school and they were in charge of the hiring. Mostly single women were hired and they had to agree to live in the community real near the school.

I recall them talking about Miss Nettie Flournoy teaching at Rhodes School. She lived in the house next to the Judge S.N. Rowe home on Buford. She did not drive or have a car. Mrs. Dan J. Brooks "Estelle" drove her to her boarding house on Monday morning and went back on Friday afternoon to bring her home for the weekend. Here is the clincher. Rhodes School was just up the hill past Kelley Packing Co., all of three miles away.

Mary Sue Morman came to Elba in about 1926 by train. The train got into Elba about 8:00 p.m. and Levy Morrow happened to be over there. He offered to take her to the Garrett Hotel and she readily accepted. She left Elba and went down the lower river road to Sand Ridge School to begin her career. That is now where New Haven Baptist Church is located. She boarded with the Lewie Williamson family. She and Levy Morrow were married and lived here, and reared a family, all of their lives. Levy died years ago, but Mary only

died a short time ago.

Harrison School was just west of Richburg. Althea Carmichael Prescott started teaching there and later at Damascus and wound up teaching in Elba City Schools. Miss Willie Blue also taught at Harrison.

My sister, Hazel Bonneau, started her teaching career in the fall of 1931 at Basin. There were several grades. Dad took her there to a Cain home, where she boarded, on Monday morning, and went to get her on Friday after school. The 1932-33 year she boarded nearer the school with the Jim Parker family. She left there and she and Phillip J. Hamm taught several years at Bluff Springs. Hazel boarded with the Albert Dyess family. Again, Dad carried her and Phil early Monday morning and went and brought them home on Friday. She taught 34 years before retiring.

There were so many of the small schools that it is impossible to even recall or name but a few that are representative.

F.M. Reeves Schoolhouse was where you turn to the right to go to the Girl Scout Camp. There is no trace of it ever existing.

The Wise school was between the Victoria Road, where Johnny Wise lived, and the Troy Road past White-water Creek. It was rather large with grades 1-8. The sisters, Nellie Martin and Pearl Moseley, taught there.

Double Heads had a school and at least one church that was near. This is above Zion Chapel. It had grades 1-9.

Zion Chapel at that time had a two room school. One room taught grades 1-3, and the other room taught 4-6.

Newbia also had a community school that Doris Whitman Pinckard taught as late as 1942-47.

Damascus had a rather large school and further down toward Samson was another rather large school that was Fairview. Doris Whitman Pinckard also taught there. Other schools, now closed, include Goodman, Basin, Victoria, and New Hope.

Several of these schools were kept open after most were consolidated into larger, better operated and more economical places of learning. The reason was simple. When a community lost its school, it lost a large part of its identity. They fought long and hard to keep them open. Change made it necessary.

One of the last of these schools was Curtis. It had grown to be quite large. Mrs. Grafton Young had not

taught for a while but WWII came along and teachers were needed. She again taught at Curtis and when James C. Dixon asked her to help out in Elba she again responded.

Curtis school began in the early 1900's where New Ebenezer Baptist Church is now. That church is called Curtis more than the proper name. The Curtis School was built in 1929 where the Coffee County Farmers' Co-op is now. They did away with Mt. Zion and Rhodes and made them part of Curtis. That was one of the first times for consolidation of

schools, that I knew of. Danley's Cross Roads had their own school and it joined Curtis in 1931. The school burned in 1940 and was rebuilt in 1941. The principals of that school were R. L. Farris, F.T. Waldon, D.B. Nelson, J.C. Cheatum, and C.M. Byrd. The last one was E.C. Griffin. It was one of the first to gather other schools into a consolidated system.

With the advent of school buses, lunchrooms, and changing times, it spelled the doom of these small schools that played a wonderful role

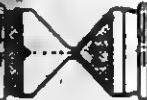
in the education of our people. If they had not been there, many would not have learned to read, write and do math. Many took that meager education and went on to become well self-educated citizens. Curtis closed for good in 1967.

We now have Zion Chapel, New Brockton, and Kinston in the Coffee County System, and Elba and Enterprise in city systems.

An education is readily available if wanted.

BY JAKE BONNEAU
THE ELBA CLIPPER

JUNE 2, 1994



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In about 1924 Dave Lubert built Elba's first ice plant. The logical place was on Beaver Dam Creek where so many mills had been since the Indians were the only ones here. He first used water power for ice making. He then began to serve the surrounding country side. This was first done with mules and wagons and later by truck. Some of the ones that worked for Lubert Ice Company were: Horace Smith, Tup Davis, Alva DeVane, Charlie Rhodes, Cresbie Grimes and at least one Black man named Marvin Lenier. His son, Marion, worked also. It was a thriving business. It meant so much to people that it is hard to imagine doing without ice.

Most all families grew up on home cured meats. They had tin cans that held 5 gallons. Meat was smoked and placed in these cans that were then filled with hog lard and a tight lid placed on top. This kept the bugs and insects from getting to the meat. Nearly all had smoke houses to cure meat to be used. Pork was about the only meat, other than chickens, that was used. On rare occasions some one would kill a beef. With no refrigeration it was announced in advance so that the neighbors would buy portions of it. It had to be used before it spoiled. At times when the owner of the beef had meat left to spare, he placed it on fresh cut pine boughs and covered it with the pine and went down the road to find buyers. Beef was not a staple of that day. Hog killing time was looked forward to for fresh meat.

Ice making was invented by Dr. John Gorrie in New Orleans in 1844. Like so many new things, it did not seem to catch on for some time. The first time it was used to any known extent was for a hospital at Apalachicola, Florida. I am sure that it was widely used in many places long before it came to the end of the railroad town of Elba.

The railroad came to Enterprise in about 1900. I am sure that it arrived in Elba about the same year. Ice was shipped from Dothan to Enterprise and Elba by box car. A tarpaulin was placed on the floor then 300 pound blocks of ice were placed on it. That was covered with another tarpaulin and saw dust piled over that for insulation to prevent melting.

The first person that I knew of handling ice in Elba was Dave Lubert. He bought ice from L.H. Moore Ice Company in Dothan and it was shipped by the car load to Elba. He built a cold storage building nearby on Railroad Avenue and Williams Street, across from the old Shelby Morrow Store. He only served Elba residents.

It was amazing what ice meant to people. They could keep their food safer for longer periods of time. Iced drinks were so refreshing in the hot summer weather. Children would go out when the ice wagons came by to get the ice shavings when they used the big toothed saw to saw a large block off the 300 pound block. It gave employment to a large number of people.

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THE ELBA CLIPPER JUNE 16, 1994

REMEMBERING WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau

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could make it. So he did.

For many years people would buy ice before they had an ice box. Some would place it in a galvanized tub with it wrapped in burlap bags or paper to keep from melting too fast. Ice was a real treasure.

We, like lots of families, had an ice box. Ours was a large oak box that held at least 100 pounds and had two side doors for storage. It was porcelain lined with a funnel that caught the melted ice water and let it fall into the sandy soil under the screened in back porch. Beside the ice refrigerator was a metal slot for ice picks and beside that was a heavy pasteboard device with a clock face and one hand that you placed on the pounds of ice you wanted if you were not at home.

All of this is rather quaint today but in that day and time you were living high on the hog with these modern conveniences.

The best I remember, the electric refrigerators began to appear in Elba in 1930-31. The cooling machinery was a large round device that sat on top of the refrigerator.

It was some time before they were widely used. Many that had them continued to buy ice because the ice from the electric refrigerator was not clear, but had a milky look.

What a different day and time we live in today. With our appliances of today it is difficult to believe how we once lived. Our side-by-side refrigerator-freezers, and over-under combos are great and to me it is hard to imagine getting along without a microwave.

I appreciate the manner my writing has been received and will continue to write from time to time but not every week.

Gulf Ice Company had the first ice plant in Enterprise and it burned. David H. James built an ice plant there in 1930. After our plant burned in 1936 he started sending ice to Elba by truck. He rented a building on the corner of Northwest Davis and Claxton to store ice and eventually put a meat cold storage in also. There was so much demand for ice that his truck left Enterprise with a full load and was stopped so many times on the way to Elba that there was little left when it arrived. Kim Bowers ran the Elba operation. Later Dozier and Gussie Bryan had an Ice Cream Parlor there or next door.

Flournoy Whitman saw a need for a plant and started one on the corner of Buford and Claxton. He also had a meat cold storage place. He started making ice in 1940-41. It was not long before he found out he could buy ice from James cheaper than he

REMEMBERING WITH JAKE

By Jake Bonneau



In days gone by, a few miles meant a lot when traveling by foot power. It might be human or animal, but it was not fast. That is the reason that at one time there were two bridges below Elba on Pea River. You now have to go all the way to Ballard's Bridge to get to the first one and that is about 15 miles away.

It is interesting to know something of the way these bridges were erected. They were probably built in the late 1800's. There was plenty of the long leaf yellow pine that was great for bridges because it was so dense, heavy and water proof. It was also straight and large enough to be sawed into huge timbers and long also. These large trees were referred to as good bridge timber trees.

The first bridge was this side of the Pea River Dam. It was about 3 miles down the river, but on the East side you had to go about 6 miles to get to it. The road to the Rainer Bridge was just this side of New Haven Baptist Church. That road went across the bridge and came out on the Kinston road inside of what is now Elba city limits. It is about 3 miles from the Court Square. I think that was called the Free Place at one time. I recall a very small country store near where it came into the road.

When Billy Perdue, Shorty Martin and other friends in our youth were down the river some of the pilings were still there.

In those days the machinery was steam powered. Compared to our modern compact machines it is difficult to image these huge, bulky, lumbering Goliaths that were the only thing available. These were used for pile drivers. They pounded these pilings into the ground deep enough to keep the water and approaches safe. These huge machines had a long boom with a cable attached to a real heavy weight. A slip collar went over and up above the pilings. The cylinder wound the cable up to pull the weight up high. The operator released the weight to drive the piling to the desired depth.

This same machine could be used as a drag line. A cable was attached to a large metal bucket. The operator swung the bucket out into the dirt to be moved and it was pulled back in with another cable and lifted to the desired location. A cable was pulled from the bottom of the bucket to release the dirt collected. It was clumsy and bulky--but it worked. Compared to a small machine that now has a front end loader on one end and a back hoe on the other it shows us the progress that has been made.

Nobody is living today that knows about these bridges. Thanks to my inquiring nature and retentive mind, I do know a good deal about them.

The Rainer Bridge was built by the Rainer brothers who had a farm or plantation on the east side of Pea River. They were Young Wood, Frank and Walter. Frank built the large house with the large columns at the west end of Davis that burned years ago. He moved to Mobile and I don't believe any of his family lives around here. Young Wood and Wal-

ter are buried at Elba Evergreen Cemetery. They have a number of offspring still living in and around South Alabama. Churchwell Bridge was below the dam. It was about 6 or 7 miles down river. You go to what is now the army helicopter field called TAC-1. It is down the Ino road from Elba. This area had several farms on the east side. The Dee Rowe family, the Jim Young family, and a Farris family that I know of lived there. I recall shooting doves with Ferrell Young in his grandfather, Jim Young's, place. Idelle Young Whitman told me shortly before her recent death at the age of 92, that she was born in Elba, but her father, Joe Young, bought a farm on the west side of Churchwell Bridge and lived there a few years when she was growing up.

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This bridge came out on the Kinston road that goes to New Haven Church. Going from Elba, it is about 7 miles. The right hand goes to New Home and the left goes to Fox Run. That road at that time went straight to Churchwell Bridge. It now makes a large U-turn and comes out on the hill above Hayes Creek.

I believe that Mr. Churchwell married a Hataway and I will tell why. Apparently, he sold his land and went to the Panama City Beach area when land there was dirt cheap. The Mr. Churchwell that I knew in the late 1940s and 1950s owned quite a bit of Gulf front property. We called it "The Hang Out". There was one large wooden building and nearer the water was concrete block buildings with 3 foot high walls surrounding them. There were two of these with concrete floors. The colorful Juke boxes were always blaring away and that was the era of Jitter Bugging and it was in full swing there.

It was really a great place for the young people to have a good time and it was rare for any trouble to occur.

Mr. Churchwell had people running all this for him and we were amused that he would walk around picking up glass coke bottles and putting them back in cases. There were no metal cans in those days.

Sam Hataway went down there and walked around in black pants and white shirt and a pistol on his hip. He did not need it. There was

little trouble then. That is why I thought Mr. Churchwell married a Hataway.

To the best of my knowledge, the Rainer and Churchwell Bridges had filled their purpose and were no longer in use when the 1929 flood occurred.

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FRONT PAGE

Family trips to Florida have changed since the 1920s

ENTERPRISE LEDGER, Wednesday, September

20, 1995

In about 1928, I saw the Gulf of Mexico for the first time in my life. I was 8 years old.

I don't know how my father found out about Seagrove, Fla. It had to be from someone that had been there.

There were few decent roads in that day and time, but people were used to that. There were more mules and wagons and horse and buggies than automobiles.

We had two automobiles. One was a Buick, and the other, I believe, was a Model A Ford. Dad informed the family several weeks in advance where we were going. Preparations were begun. We were told that we had to carry lots of what we wanted with us.

By the way, in those days people did not call their help "maids," they called them cooks. They did the same thing. Sybil Balkum was one of the family. She was with us about 25 years and beloved by all. Sybil and Mother packed boxes of home-preserved jellies, vegetables and fruits. Corn meal, salt, pepper and other things they thought would be needed.

Everything was loaded into the small car. They left room for the driver and Sybil. We had a folding luggage rack that attached to the running board on the passenger side so you could carry suitcases wrapped in oil cloth in case of rain. Cars did not have trunks built into them. The spare tire was mounted in the back of the car. Daddy drove with Mother up front. Corinne, my sister, and I went in the back with other belongings.

We went to DeFuniak and wound through the streets of town to get to the road to Freeport. All of this started before daylight because my father had been told exactly what time we had to be there to catch the ferry. When we got to Freeport, we turned to the left. We went a few miles and turned right toward Choctawatchee Bay.

We went to a place called Jolly Bay. There was no bridge across the bay for 50 miles or more in either direction. The area where cars waited was filled with oyster shells to keep it from being so sandy you would get stuck.

There was a wooden approach pier that the ferry boat pulled up to and tied tight. Cars would drive onto the ferry. It held about 10 to 12 cars. The front bumpers were hanging off the boat on one end, and the back bumpers were hanging off on the other.



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A man and his two sons ran it. They put blocks in front and back of the car tires so they would be safe.

This was quite an experience within itself. You could not see land in the crossing. You landed at Point Washington. You drove off after they docked and secured the ferry. There was a small country store of that era; they carried very little variety of goods.

The two cars drove about 10 miles over two rut Florida and sand bed roads. Dad went over a small raised spot in the road, and I saw the biggest body of water I had ever seen. There was the great Gulf of Mexico.

We were shortly in Seagrove. It was, and is today, a most impressive location. It is about 20 feet higher there than the beaches. Most areas along the Gulf are not that high. Due to its height, the trees were not nearly as stunted from the salty breeze and storms. There under all of those trees was a large number of cabins. None of them had windows. They were screened areas on at least two sides of each room.

There were wooden solid panels, hinged at the top and held up with wood stakes that had notched pieces in the panels and on the walls. When up, they formed awning on all openings. This let the breezes from the Gulf come through. It was a real pretty setting.

There was no plumbing. There was a large water tank up on wood poles that supplied water to a number of water faucets scattered around the area. There were several outdoor outlets. Cooking was done on kerosene stoves. There was an area cleared out about 100 feet going to the Gulf with a wooden walkway.

As you come to the area where you walked down long wooden steps to the beach, there was a 35 by 35-foot building to the left. This had one corner with solid walls in the corner about 12 feet on each side. This pro-

tected the piano that was in the corner. Dances were held in the pavilion. The rest of this upstairs pavilion had only posts to hold it up. Cool air came through under this building, looking out at the Gulf were dressing rooms.

A landing area off the steps going up and down to the Gulf had showers where you bathed with your suits on before going to your dressing room. This was the only bathing facilities available, but you must remember, in that day and time, very few people in this area had indoor plumbing. It was very adequate.

I am sure cooking was not that easy. We carried slab bacon, hams; all of this was smoked and cured. Local fishermen brought fresh fish by to sell, and we all learned very quickly to use crab nets. Local people taught us to boil and dress fresh-caught crabs. There were people from South Alabama that became friends. I remember when several families from Elba would be there at the same time. I'm sure they had planned it that way.

We went to Seagrove a number of times over the early years.

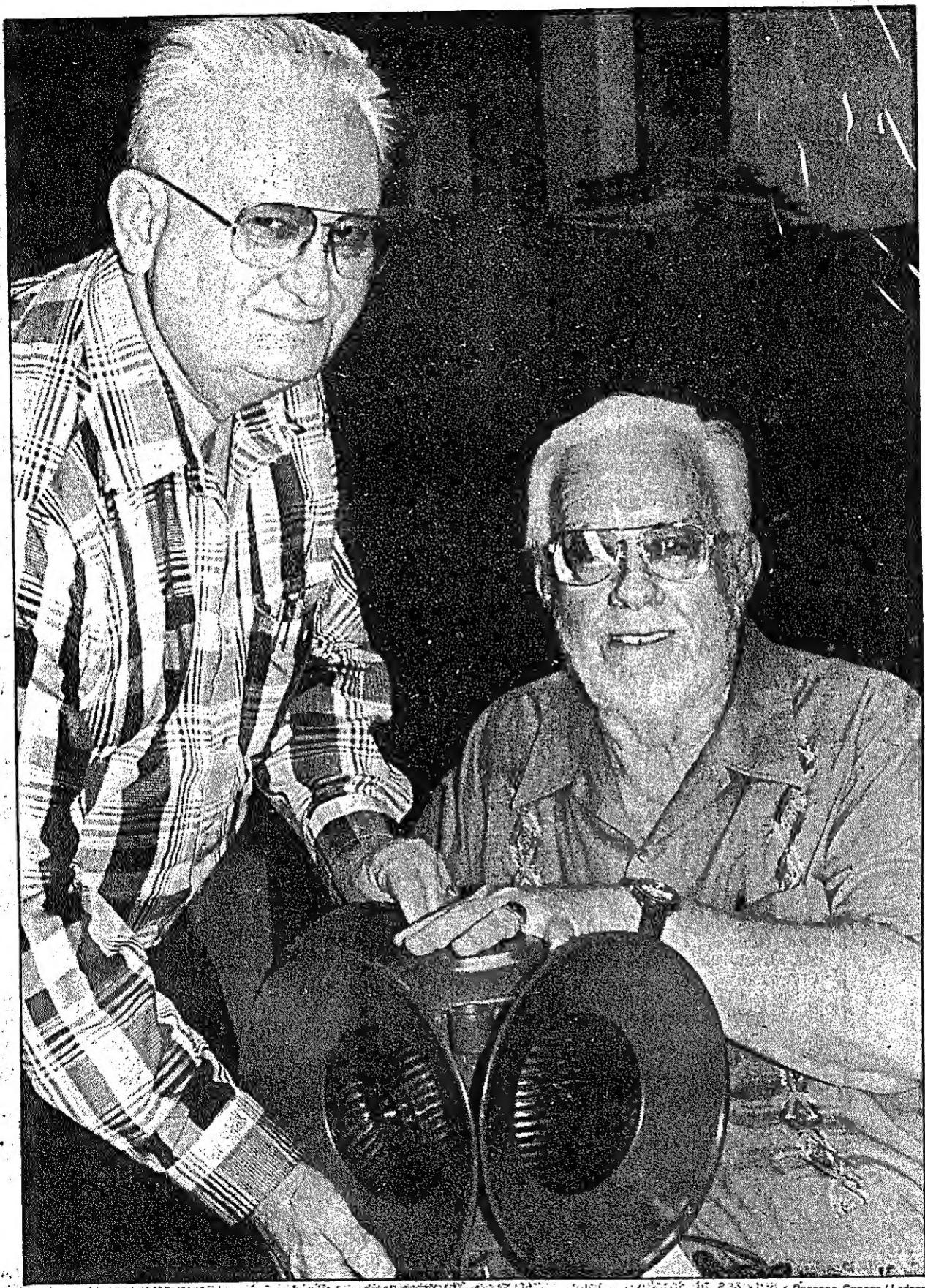
I trust you would realize that now to get to Seagrove, you go down to Opp and get on U.S. 331.

When you got to Choctawatchee Bay, there was for many years a drawbridge there. This was called "Long Bridge."

When a boat was coming, the span was let up and traffic stopped on both sides until the boat went through. The panhandle of Florida has grown and traffic is now so heavy that they have built a high bridge that boats go under.

There was no U.S. 331. There was no U.S. 98 that ran along the coast. There was no way to go to Panama City or to Fort Walton unless you went by ferry back across the bay. There was no bridge across Phillips Inlet going to Panama City and no bridge going from Destin across East Pass. This will be hard for any younger person to believe. There was no bridge to cross the sound at what is now Fort Walton over to the Gulf side. It is not amazing the changes that have occurred in one short lifetime. While I am on a roll, I may write next about "Camp Walton."

Jake Bonneau, a local historian, was born in 1919. He has written several articles on the history of this area. Much of his writing comes from personal experience.



Roxanne Connor / Ledger

Roy Shoffner, left, accepts the railroad light from John Jacob Bonneau of Elba on behalf of the Pea River Historical Society.

7/15/90

OF INTEREST TO SENIORS

Dorseys have played im role in community for ye

The name of Dorsey in Elba and Coffee County has played an important role in the entire Wiregrass area economy for a long time.

From everything I can learn, the Dorsey family originally came from Georgia. I know that C.E. "Pete" Dorsey, Henry A. and Mack started working for L.A. Boyd Lumber Company in Richburg.

There could have been a connection in Georgia. Boyd, of course, was considerably older, but he had a very big lumber operation in the days of virgin long-leaf pine trees. The Dorsey brothers, Henry, Pete and Mack, worked at his machine shop.

They kept the steam plant that powered the lumber mill. Boyd has several tram railroads that went in every direction out of Richburg, all the way to the Florida line bringing logs to the Mill to be sawed. The Dorseys were the ones that kept that huge operation running.

One time Henry was on one of the railroad engines when it was derailed. Henry jumped away as it overturned and was not killed; Joe Stephenson and others jumped the wrong way and were killed. I am sure that this is where the Dorseys found out how skilled they were with machinery.

The parents of these and the others in this family were Henry Dorsey who married Epsie Hooks in Georgia. Their children were Henry Augustus, Mack, Claude Eugene "Pete," Alton and Warren. The girl were Bessie, Zula and Willie.

Henry Augustus Dorsey married Leila Stephens. Their children were Lorene, who married Sam Sawyer; Henry Augustus Jr. who married Mary Virginia Lee and Theron



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Kimmie who married Betty Benton. Mack Dorsey's wife was named Maggie. Claude Eugene "Pete" Dorsey married Gladys Stephens, the sister of Leila who married Henry. I have no idea who Alton and Warren married. Bessie Dorsey married Sam Byrd, Zula married a Mr. Jordan, and Willie married a Mr. Rollins. Sam Byrd lived in Georgia which leads me to believe the Dorseys still had Georgia roots.

Henry and brother Pete started in business as Dorsey Bros. here in Elba. It has been said that Henry invented the first stump puller, and others give them credit for jointly inventing it. I have no idea, but it was very successful. All of these huge pine trees that had been cut left stumps that had to be removed before the land could be cultivated. Roads were being built, and stumps had to be gotten out before you could go through. Cars were made high off the ground so that, like a wagon, they could straddle stumps. The stump puller came into existence in 1920. It was the first practical way to do it. They also built a log skidder.

I have heard that their first machine shop was on the northeast

corner of Claxton and Davis, across from the Methodist Church. They moved from the location to the corner of North Court and Buford.

That is where the first trailer was built in 1926. Naturally, it was a log trailer. Trucks had come into existence, and they could pull a trailer to the mill much better than railroads.

Henry A. Dorsey had moved to Enterprise, and he had the first automobile franchise there. His brother C.E. "Pete" Dorsey had the first auto franchise in Elba.

Henry was a charter member and first president of the Enterprise Rotary Club. Henry's wife died real young, and he married Mamie Edge. From all I've read and heard about her, she was another fine Christian lady. I will give all of these statistics here:

Henry Augustus Dorsey — born Oct. 31, 1885 and died Oct. 12, 1929

Leila Stephens Dorsey — born March 29, 1890 and died Feb. 11, 1923

Mamie Edge Dorsey — born Feb. 10, 1889 and died Nov. 3, 1974

Leila S. Dorsey — died of pneumonia at age 32. (There were no antibiotics in that day, and a lot of people died then, that today would live.)

Henry Augustus — died of cancer at age 44.

I have no idea of what business arrangements had been made between Henry A. and his brother Pete. Pete had lived in Elba and continued to operate the automobile and manufacturing business in Elba.

The Dorsey Ford Company was on the corner of Factory and Simmons, where Skinner Furniture is now. James Vardie Wright started working there soon after it started. He started as a bookkeeper and

HURRY IN FOR SAVINGS!



In section "C" of the cemetery

Added by: Rick & Kat on 16 Oct 2011